Our 2019 Annual Report was mailed in late July, a little behind schedule because of COVID-19 and a change in printing companies. While 2019 may seem like long ago, we hope you will read and enjoy stories of generosity, impact, and the continuing growth of our Community Foundation and our work to meet the many challenges in our communities. Read the full report [here](#). Extra printed copies are available at our office. We encourage you to share our work with friends and community members!

**Memorial Tribute:**

**Legacy of a Woman Pioneer**

Anita Nickels Johnson
1925 - 2020

Described as a strong and independent woman ahead of her time, Anita Johnson enjoyed a long and successful career in librarianship and, more generally, education. She was a lifelong learner and avid global explorer. She loved music; she and her husband owned three vintage player pianos and were major patrons of the musical arts.

A decade ago, Anita established the *Steven B. and Anita Nickels Johnson Fund* to support the local botanical gardens’ programs and maintenance of the greenhouse. A generous estate gift will establish a new fund at our Community Foundation to support STEM education for girls.
In June 2018, our Community Foundation convened the first several meetings of what would become the Mesa County Opioid Response Group (MC ORG). Comprised of over 100 providers and member organizations, this group has been meeting since then to address the challenges of opioid and other substance use in our community.

The collaboration has helped attract federal funding for projects like Homeward Bound’s Pathways for Recovery and St. Mary’s Medically Assisted Treatment (MAT) Clinic.

With support from our Brownson Memorial Fund, the MC ORG is holding their 2nd Annual Resource Fair on September 29th (virtual) and produced the Substance Use Resource Guide (pictured above and linked here).

The Brownson Memorial Fund is the only funding dedicated to substance use prevention and treatment in Mesa County.

Notes her son, Raymond Nickels, "My mother loved her adopted home town of Grand Junction and believed strongly in the power of education to change and improve lives. She would want to encourage young women to pursue academic interests like engineering and mathematics that are traditionally less open to them. This is a wonderful way to honor my mother and her pioneering spirit."

Other philanthropic interests included her church and a variety of education and arts/cultural organizations: the Grand Junction Symphony, the Museums of Western Colorado, and the John McConnell Math and Science Center, now known as Eureka! McConnell Science Museum.

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School Based Health Clinic

Warrior Wellness Center Opens at Central High School

A project funded by several of our donor funds, Mesa County’s first School Based Health Center opened last month at Central High School. The new Warrior Wellness Center is a collaboration between District 51, MarillacHealth, and Central High School. The Center provides primary care services, mental health care, nutrition education, and health education to students. Many of our surrounding counties have a long history of successful school based health centers, in serving youth directly on their school campus.

Air Quality Matters
County; this year, this field-of-interest fund supported 13 different projects and distributed a total of $37,000 in grants.

**Leading the Fight Against Hunger**

Community Foundation Receives Generous Colorado Health Foundation Grant

Our Community Foundation is pleased to announce a significant grant from The Colorado Health Foundation to support and expand Mesa County’s work to reduce food insecurity and strengthen our hunger relief organizations. Six organizations collaborated on the grant application.

Funding will be used over the next two years to do more inter-agency planning work around sharing resources and increasing operating efficiencies; encouraging more school children to participate in the school meal program; equipment and a staff position at Community Food Bank; and grants to hunger relief organizations to increase access to healthy foods.

This is the second grant from the Colorado Health Foundation in two years for Mesa County’s efforts to

As the Pine Gulch Fire smoke blanketed western Colorado for weeks in August, thousands of people turned to PurpleAir.com to check the air quality readings generated by a system of monitors provided by Citizens for Clean Air (CCA). Purple Air staff reported a ten-fold increase in page views during this period. Our Community Foundation funded CCA in 2018 for their initial investment in the monitors.

The recent wildfires are a reminder that it is important for the community to have access to real time air quality data to plan their activities outside. Thanks to CCA for installing the network and making the data available to all of us. See more information on CCA [here](#).

**Grantee Spotlight**

Karis/The House Opening New Laurel House Apartments for Homeless Youth
Welcome to our New Accountant!

Billie Nix joined our Community Foundation in mid July as our new Accountant. She brings strong accounting skills from a career in the business sector and, most recently, the City of Fruita. "I am excited to be part of an organization that is mission-driven and community-focused," shares Billie about her new job.

Billie enjoys hiking and biking with her husband and two rescue dogs.

You can reach Billie at bnix@wc-cf.org.

Karis' Laurel House Apartments will open soon with 34 units of permanent, supportive housing for homeless youth. Many donors from our Foundation are supporting this innovative project to provide housing and wrap-around support services for these youth.

Each apartment will be fully furnished and include a full kitchen. The building includes 3,000 square feet of common space for optional services, community gatherings, art, reading, and cooking. The surrounding grounds include outdoor space for a dog run, recreational activities, and a south facing covered patio. The building was designed to evoke a sense of wonder for visitors and residents alike, and above all, a place to give these youth safety and hope for a new day.

Laurel House’s Grand Opening for the community is Saturday, October 3rd, and more information can be found here.

Reflections from the Executive Director

The Ripple Effect. The photo on the cover of our recently released Annual Report is a stunning image of a pebble dropped in water (a clear and cool mountain stream), with the concentric circles rippling out from the point of initial impact. Our readers LOVE the photo! Simple and powerful, it captures this compelling concept of ripple effect - small gesture and huge impact.
That image is tinged with irony. Chosen in optimism last February, it seems a bit out of place given the absence of water when we needed it most this summer, facing ongoing drought conditions and destructive wildfires here in western Colorado.

What are the ripple effects of 2020? Certainly the COVID-19 virus with its lethal spread. The health crisis hit, and businesses had to close for ten weeks beginning in March, per state and federal health mandates. We regrouped and slowly opened businesses back up following appropriate health guidelines, and then schools this fall, only to have cluster outbreaks that send groups of students into quarantine. The COVID-19 pandemic has had profound ripple effects this year, and the pandemic is far from over. We will most likely see the impacts of this health and economic crisis for some time to come.

And yet our Community Foundation’s donor gifts and grants continue to have a most positive impact, albeit one small pebble at a time. Our generous community raised thousands of dollars for hunger relief - providing boxes and boxes of food items for people, perhaps suffering from the loss of a job or other reduction in income, not sure where their next meal might come from, thankful to receive some emergency food assistance at one of our hard-working food pantries. Social services offered through an array of nonprofit agencies that have seen an increase in anxiety and inability to cope, receiving general support grants so they can staff up and reach more people in these COVID times.

In reviewing our mid-year financial statements, we realized that our grantmaking is up 10% year-to-date over last year - that's $2.5 million in grants and scholarships distributed into our communities so far this year. While I worry at times this seems but "a drop in the bucket" compared to the immense needs right now, it is also a lot of funding in this community - and does make a cumulative impact - one grant made, one person served at a time. And that is the power of the Ripple Effect.

-- Anne Wenzel