2019 ANNUAL REPORT

IMPACT!

BERKS COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
25th Anniversary
1994 - 2019
The Power of the Purse in Berks County Fund awarded a grant of $1,800 to Girls on the Run (GOTR) of Berks County to launch its first ever one-week summer program, Camp GOTR.
Berks County Community Foundation is a tax-exempt public charity with a mission to promote philanthropy and improve the quality of life for the residents of Berks County.

The Community Foundation invests and administers charitable funds established by people who want to help the region meet the unique challenges it faces. A volunteer board identifies those challenges and oversees the foundation.

Berks County Community Foundation administers 360 charitable funds. At the end of June 2019, the Community Foundation had assets of $91.7 million and had awarded $59.1 million in grants and scholarships since its founding in 1994.

This report reflects grants and activities in the fiscal year ending June 30, 2019. Some of the activities mentioned here took place after that date, but funding for them was approved before June 30.

For regular updates on funding and educational opportunities, and to get advance notice of our activities, go to bccf.org and sign up for our monthly e-newsletter.

Berks County Community Foundation develops, manages and distributes funds for charitable purposes in the community. The official registration and financial information of Berks County Community Foundation may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1.800.732.0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Photo on front cover: Berks Vital Signs (berksvitalsigns.com) issued several informational reports throughout the year, including one that examined how technology is transforming education in Berks County.

Kevin Murphy, Community Foundation president, and P. Sue Perrotty, Community Foundation board chair, celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Community Foundation at a board meeting on June 7, 2019. That was 25 years to the day since the Community Foundation’s articles of incorporation were filed in 1994.
Berks County Community Foundation awarded $5,254,785 in grants and scholarships to about 1,000 organizations and individuals during the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2019.

The grants aligned with the Community Foundation’s mission to promote philanthropy and improve the quality of life for the residents of Berks County by

• encouraging others to give of themselves;
• advancing educational attainment;
• increasing access to health care and dental care;
• bringing the arts to under-served areas of our rural and urban communities;
• supporting downtown Reading;
• preserving history;
• and much more.

In these pages, you will learn about these and other initiatives that receive support from the Community Foundation.

We engage in this work to make the communities we all call home better today and for generations to come. Read on for just some of the ways that the Community Foundation is enhancing Berks County.

Sincerely,

P. Sue Perrotty,
Chair of the Board

Dear Friends,

Berks County Community Foundation was a scrappy startup when it was founded 25 years ago. In its first full fiscal year, the Community Foundation awarded four grants.

That isn’t to say the Community Foundation didn’t have a significant impact in those early days.

If you asked people then and if you ask people now what they love about Berks County, one popular answer has stayed pretty much the same: “You can be in the city and then 10 minutes later you can be driving around the countryside.”

But that answer might have been very different today.

Using a grant of about $4,000 in 1998, the Community Foundation hired a consultant who worked with several different groups to agree on a goal to preserve 200,000 acres of farmland.

At that time, the county government was spending about $1 million a year to buy conservation easements – guarantees from farmers that their land would never be developed.

That was sort of like trying to bail out the ocean with a Dixie cup.

So the Community Foundation encouraged county officials to use the $1 million to borrow money so they could start buying more conservation easements before more land was developed. By the end of the year, the county commissioners floated a $35 million bond issue that, with matching grants from the state, led to about $50 million being spent on farmland conservation in Berks County over a five-year period. At the end of that period, the Community Foundation reconvened the interested parties. They re-evaluated their goals, and another $35 million bond was floated with matching state grants.

A $4,000 grant that ultimately triggered about $100 million in state and federal investment took us from a community that was in danger of losing its farmland to one that will always have it.

Berks County and the Community Foundation have come a long way since then.

Looking back, with thousands of grants awarded that total about $60 million over 25 years, I can’t pick just one grant that makes me particularly proud.

But I can say that the Community Foundation’s role in bringing various organizations together to create the Berks
All of the plants on the green roofs and in the landscaping around the Community Foundation building are native to the area and don’t require special irrigation once they take root.

The floor in the lobby of the Community Foundation is made from a combination of recycled fly ash, recycled slag and Portland cement. The tri-blend concrete is strong and doesn’t increase the cost of the building, so the construction firm that built the building now uses it on other projects. The staircase in the lobby is made of wood that was reclaimed from the Coney Island Pier in New York when it was refurbished in the 1980s. The drainage tube that runs down through the staircase takes water from the roof when it rains and deposits it into a 5,000-gallon cistern under the lobby. That water is used to flush the toilets in the building.

Community Health Center resulted in a remarkable accomplishment. The federally qualified health center, which now operates from several locations, provides access to care for all patients, regardless of their ability to pay.

It’s an option for health care that our residents deserve.

This year also marked 10 years since the Community Foundation moved into its environmentally friendly headquarters. When it opened in 2009, this was the first building in Reading to be certified under the U.S. Green Building Council’s LEED® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) program. It remains the only building in the region to have achieved the program’s highest honor: A platinum rating.

This summer’s record rainfall kept our green roofs green and our rainwater recycling system at full capacity. It was a fitting way for Mother Nature to acknowledge the 10th anniversary of the building’s environmentally friendly features, which include:

- A south-facing facade that allows more daylight into the building.
- Roofs made of soil and native plants that collect rainwater and help insulate the building.
- Lights controlled by motion sensors that are also self-dimming based on the amount of daylight in the room.

We love our home at Third and Court streets, which is heavily used by community groups, houses a business incubator, and serves as a hub for nonprofit activity. We’ve enjoyed sharing the building with others and we have particularly appreciated visitors’ interest in the story of how sustainable design and construction make a great — and economically efficient — building.

Our decision to pursue LEED® accreditation was based on the idea that it would inspire others to do the same and that we could be a model for better design and construction of buildings in our area.

Today, our building is one of 25 such structures in Berks County.

Even though not every building owner pursues LEED® accreditation, many of the design and construction practices that we used have become more common in Berks as the contractors who worked on our project saw the benefits of saving money while being environmentally responsible.

That’s a big change since 1994 when we were worried that builders would pave the entire county.

A lot has changed in 25 years.

But, for the Community Foundation, striving to be a good environmental steward will never change.

Sincerely,

Kevin K. Murphy,
Community Foundation President
The Youth Advisory Board assessed the chemical and biological health of a local tributary to the Schuylkill River. The information was added to a larger database to map the ongoing health of local water.
Jump Start got a makeover.
We completed a remodeling project to increase the number of offices in our Jump Start Incubator program. The program’s capacity for entrepreneurs went from space for 8 companies to 13. Interest in the new offices was immediate, which says a lot for the program and for the entrepreneurial spirit in downtown Reading. Learn more at JumpStartBerks.org.

Our youth group has been refocused.
After more than 20 years, our Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) merged with another program to become the Youth Advisory Board (YAB), a program of the Community Foundation and the Youth Volunteer Corps of Reading (YVC). YVC is run by VOiCEup, which is a fund of the Community Foundation. This may seem like simple internal reshuffling, but the effect has been to merge one program (YAC) about awarding grants and being philanthropic with another program (YVC) about volunteering and evaluating community needs. It’s been a perfect marriage of charitable giving and thoughtful volunteerism.

From 1998 to 2019, the former YAC program distributed 107 grants totaling $328,258. Grants will now be distributed from the Youth and Philanthropy Fund of Berks County Community Foundation through the new YAB program.

Two new members have joined our Board of Directors.
Vicki Ebner is Senior Counsel at East Penn Manufacturing and is a former chair of the board at SafeBerks.
Bala Peterson is Director of Research and Development at Fenix Group International and current chair of the board of bctv.org.

We promoted one staff member and added two more.
Eunis Domenech was promoted to Finance and Operations Administrator. Eunis had served as the Community Foundation’s receptionist since 2015. Her bilingual skills make her an excellent resource for her colleagues and for visitors to the Community Foundation.

Megan Roswick is our new Director of Accounting. A Certified Public Accountant, Megan received her Bachelor of Science in accounting from the University of Delaware. In 2018, the Pennsylvania Institute of Certified Public Accountants named her a 2018 Young Leader. That same year, she was named one of the Top 40 Professionals Under 40 by the Reading Eagle.
Josie Munroe was hired as our receptionist to replace Eunis.
Josie is one of a growing number of our staff members who are bilingual.
DOOR OPENER SOCIETY

Berks County Community Foundation established the Door Opener Society to honor attorneys, accountants, trust officers, and estate and financial planners who have helped clients achieve their charitable objectives through the Community Foundation. These advisors have worked effectively with the Community Foundation to optimize their clients’ gifts to our community. The following are members of the Door Opener Society:

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- J. William Widing, III, Esq.
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- Thomas K. Williams, CPA, CFP
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THE FRANKLIN SOCIETY

Benjamin Franklin was one of the first Americans to create an endowment for the benefit of his community. In his will, Franklin gave 1,000 Pounds Sterling each to the cities of Philadelphia and Boston. A portion of that money also came to Berks County Community Foundation as its first bequest. The Franklin Society recognizes those who have made such bequests.

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* Officers and Directors as of July 1, 2019.

** Serves as an officer, not a board member.

*Committee members as of July 1, 2019.
This year also marked 10 years since the Community Foundation moved into its environmentally friendly headquarters.
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION STAFF*

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*Staff as of November 1, 2019
TOTAL ASSETS 1995-2019

1995 | $678,938
2000 | $24,908,551
2005 | $38,740,943
2010 | $49,428,689
2019 | $91,684,434

CUMULATIVE GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS SINCE INCEPTION

$11,384 | 1995
$3,711,912 | 2000
$16,776,661 | 2005
$29,985,978 | 2010
InvesTMenT POIICY

The investment policy of Berks County Community Foundation is similar to that of most community foundations. The Foundation has a diversified and balanced portfolio of about 75 percent stocks and 25 percent bonds.

The objective of the investment policy is to provide a return that will preserve and grow the Community Foundation's assets, while providing a consistent stream of revenue to issue grants and scholarships. Annual distributions by the Community Foundation are generally calculated at 4.5 percent of the fair value of each grant and scholarship fund. When annual earnings exceed a year's distribution from a fund, the excess is retained in endowment principal.

This strategy is intended to grow fund assets, thereby ensuring that the funds will fulfill their purpose in perpetuity.

For a copy of the Community Foundation's investment policy, audited financial statements and our tax return, please visit bccf.org, or call 610.685.2223.
The Community Foundation funded a program to apply dental sealants to the teeth of children enrolled in the summer education program in the Reading School District.
Brush Up Berks is arming thousands of children and parents in Berks County with oral hygiene products and knowledge.

A project of the Berks County Task Force for Oral Health, Brush Up Berks publishes resources on oral health for educators, parents, and medical and dental professionals at BrushUpBerks.com.

The initiative also provides funding to various community programs that improve oral health in Berks County.

Some of this year’s efforts:

- A Berks Community Health Center project presented dental hygiene kits to 621 children and 191 pregnant moms at area daycare centers and other locations.
- Penn State Health Medical Group’s All About Children gave 2,000 age-appropriate books per month to children to teach them about best oral health practices.
- Berks Community Health Center purchased equipment for the dental suite at its new Rockland Street location.
- The Reading School District Dental Department’s “Summer Sealant” program applied dental sealants to the teeth of children who were enrolled in summer education programs. Dental sealant is a thin coating painted on the chewing surfaces of teeth to prevent tooth decay.
- Community Prevention Partnership’s “Bright Smiles” initiative educated more than 600 children from impoverished families about oral hygiene and connected them to dental care.
- Reading Public Library provided stainless steel water bottles to 500 children who either attended an oral health program or completed an oral health activity. The children were encouraged to fill and refill the bottles from sinks at home or at library water fountains where the water is fluoridated to help prevent cavities.

The Berks County Task Force for Oral Health is committed to improving access to care and increasing the number of parents and caregivers who understand the importance of their children’s oral health. The task force is a community-driven effort convened by the Berks County Community Foundation to turn the tide on the county’s oral health.

The task force held its first meeting in the spring of 2014 at Berks County Community Foundation to address oral health, one of the priorities identified in the 2013 Berks County Health Needs Assessment.
The total amount of scholarships awarded since the Community Foundation’s inception in 1994 now totals $9,606,358.
The Conrad Weiser Science Research Institute (SRI) doubled the size of its summer program in 2019 and offered the opportunity to participate to dozens of students from around Berks County and not only to those students in the Conrad Weiser Area School District.

The 2019 summer program had 150 participants. Funding for the expansion came from a variety of sources, including $10,000 from Arrow International Scholarship Fund of Berks County Community Foundation. That grant strengthened the program by supplying instructional assistance from Albright College interns.

SRI provides unique opportunities and equipment for students to further their study of cutting-edge research science. SRI focuses on improving collaborative environments between students and university and industry pioneers. Through SRI, Conrad Weiser science teachers provide students with the opportunity to explore their ideas and delve into high-level science projects. The Community Foundation administers the Conrad Weiser Science Research Institute Fund to support the program.

This summer program provides unique opportunities and equipment for students to further their study of cutting-edge research science.
The weekly Penn Street Market is an open-air, seasonal farmers market in the heart of downtown Reading. The market features local farm produce, fresh meats, baked goods, locally owned restaurants, food trucks, entertainment, cooking demonstrations, and more.
From the free Downtown Alive summer concert series to the outdoor wintertime Fire + Ice Fest, Berks County Community Foundation supports a variety of initiatives that enliven the heart of Reading and Berks County.

Visitors are attracted to Penn Street by the reinvigorated Penn Street Market, which the Community Foundation helped resurrect, and by interesting arts activities, such as interactive walking theater productions by Barrio Alegria. The Community Foundation has funded many arts offerings downtown, including the work of Barrio Alegria, a self-described “community transformation organization” that engages the community with art to develop social and multicultural awareness.

Recent cleaning and gardening work that was performed downtown by men from Hope Rescue Mission was funded by a portion of a grant from the BB&T Economic Growth Fund of Berks County Community Foundation. The overall grant is part of a “greening of Penn Street initiative.”

The Community Foundation itself routinely draws visitors downtown for meetings in our Community Conference Center, art shows featuring the work of local students, and tours of our green building, which was the first non-residential green building in Reading. The building earned a platinum level of certification, the highest that is awarded by the U.S. Green Building Council.

Arts shows featuring the work of local students often draw a crowd to the Community Foundation building.

The Community Foundation has funded a variety of arts activities, such as this roving theater by Barrio Alegria, that attract visitors and the attention of passersby.
The 2018-2019 fiscal year was the end of a five-year initiative to invest $250,000 in arts activities around Penn Street in Reading and its sister initiative to award another $250,000 in arts activities in Berks County's rural communities.

Dozens of activities received funding, including community concerts, musicals, a roving dramatic performance on Penn Street, puppet shows, and more.

Many of the rural artistic offerings took place in townships and boroughs that were identified in the Community Foundation’s Vital Signs reports as places where people were least likely to have experienced an art event in the previous year.

The Yocum Institute for Arts Education received $15,060 to stage a dozen performances of Charlotte’s Web at rural elementary schools.

The locally written and produced film Dust Nuggets received a grant of $10,000, which allowed production to begin while other financial support was secured. The film, which included a local cast as well as some Hollywood names such as Eric Roberts, premiered at The Hamburg Strand Theater.

NURTURING THE ARTS

The Yocum Institute for Arts Education received $15,060 to stage a dozen performances of Charlotte’s Web at rural elementary schools.
For the first time in 18 years, proceeds of Berks County’s annual gala to battle cystic fibrosis were made available to directly help those locally who struggle against the disease.

As in past years, some event proceeds still go toward national research.

The local focus came about through a new partnership between local organizers of the event and the Community Foundation, which now administers the new Cystic Fibrosis Fund of Berks County.

Grants distributed from the fund support cystic fibrosis research and the treatment and care of local individuals and families affected by cystic fibrosis.

The gala has raised more than $1 million since it began.

To kick off the gala’s new local concentration, Colton Underwood of ABC’s “The Bachelor” was the host for 2019. The former NFL player talked about how his cousin Harper’s diagnosis with the disease motivated him to start the Colton Underwood Legacy Foundation, which provides resources for research and support of people living with cystic fibrosis.

The Legacy Foundation seeks to deliver an AffloVest to a child in every state in the United States. The AffloVest by International Biophysics is the first fully mobile, mechanical, high-frequency chest wall oscillation vest that can help clear excess mucus from lung airways as part of the daily treatment for cystic fibrosis.
The Community Foundation’s summer interns visited many churches, including Calvary Reformed United Church of Christ, in an attempt to evaluate every building that was ever built as a house of worship in Reading.
The Community Foundation made several forays into historic preservation in 2019.

For example, visitors to historic Joanna Furnace Ironworks this year were able to see the results of preservation work supported by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, The National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the Conservation Equity Fund of Berks County Community Foundation.

After five years of research and planning, the $160,000 project was completed to preserve the site’s bosh, which is the interior lining of the blast furnace. It is one of the last remaining boshes in the eastern United States.

The charcoal-fueled iron furnace and community was founded in 1791 in Robeson Township, about three miles north of Morgantown.

Also in 2019, the Community Foundation hired three summer interns to begin the mammoth task of identifying, cataloging and evaluating every building that’s ever been built in the City of Reading to serve as a house of worship. Eventually, the project will encompass all of Berks County.

It’s no secret that many local congregations are in deep decline, as they are all across the country. A significant number of churches have already closed. The fate of some is very uncertain.

All around Berks County, these church buildings are repositories of our heritage.

This project will ultimately create a database of those buildings to identify church buildings (including mosques, chapels, synagogues and any other building built specifically for worship):

- with a particularly high priority for preservation due to their unique historical, architectural or artistic value.
- that are strong candidates for preservation through repurposing. Some buildings could become health care facilities, community centers, or recreation sites.

The interns were trained at Partners for Sacred Places, a Philadelphia-based organization that works all across the United States to preserve church buildings.
The Power of the Purse in Berks County – a women’s philanthropy group based at the Community Foundation – awarded its largest ever round of grants in 2019. Programs that benefited included those that help local women and girls increase their leadership skills, sense of empowerment, and ability to find employment.

The Power of the Purse in Berks County Fund awarded $45,000 to seven organizations. Women who wanted to improve the lives of other local women and children started the Power of the Purse in Berks County in 2012.

Annually, from November to May, group members review grant applications, visit nonprofits, and vote to determine which programs will receive grants. Since the group began, it has awarded $225,903 to local organizations.

Find out more, including how to join, at bccf.org/pop/
INCREASING ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

Programs that seek to reduce teen pregnancy, improve oral health, and enhance children’s nutrition and fitness were among initiatives receiving $256,731 in healthcare grants from Berks County Community Foundation.

The grants came from three separate funds at the Community Foundation: The Community General Hospital Healthcare Fund, the DentaQuest Fund, and the Arrow International Scholarship Fund.

MEASURING VITALITY

Information from Berks Vital Signs can be used to improve the local quality of life and to better understand when things are going well. One report examined how technology is transforming education in Berks County.

Berks Vital Signs provides information about our community that can be used to improve the local quality of life and to better understand when things are going well. At BerksVitalSigns.com, you can explore data sets, which include a variety of ways to compare areas within the county, with surrounding counties, and with the state and nation.

The site also serves as a repository for community research, making important reports and documents available in one location.

As part of its 25th Anniversary Celebration, Berks County Community Foundation also produced a variety of information projects for Berks Vital Signs in 2019.

For instance, one report examined how technology is transforming education in Berks County.
The First United Church of Christ’s endowment was transferred to Berks County Community Foundation so that the church’s mission can continue.

CONTINUING MISSIONS

A trip to the beach is part of an annual routine for many people. But it was the trip of a lifetime for a dozen residents of Bethany Children’s Home. Their vacation was funded by a grant from the First United Church of Christ Mission Fund of Berks County Community Foundation.

Bethany Children’s Home is a group home/campus for youth who have been through trauma and have been removed from their home settings. The nonprofit organization helps youth with their coping, social and daily living skills.

When the Community Foundation awards a grant, the recipient is required to submit a report about how the money was used.

Here’s an excerpt from the report by Bethany Children’s Home:

*The goal of this trip each year is to give our youth who have earned it the opportunity to leave their worries and trauma for a few days. We strive to give them each a glimpse of the broader world, a small dose of normalcy, and the chance to do and see something they may never get to again in the form of a vacation...*

We are able to help our youth see a bigger world than the one they may have known before. It shows them there is more to life, and helps them understand they may have to work for the things they want in life...

For our youth... this trip means more to them than we can imagine...

In 2017, after 264 years at 611 Washington St. in Reading, the First United Church of Christ historic building was given to another congregation. The First United Church of Christ’s endowment was transferred to Berks County Community Foundation so that the church’s mission can continue.

Since that time, the Mission Fund has awarded 21 grants totaling $76,375.
A trip to the beach was the trip of a lifetime for a dozen residents of Bethany Children’s Home.