Community Foundations

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***Opening music***

Theory. Practice. Discourse. Research. Insights. Dialogue.

***WGVU’s Jennifer Moss:***

Your’e listening to Tilting the Earth's Praxis, a weekly discussion of important issues that impact civil society. With host Salvatore Alaimo.

***Salvatore Alaimo***

There are over 900 of them across the United States, and they can be found in all 50 states. They range in size with assets ranging from less than $100,000 to more than $1.7 billion. Most recently, they collectively gave over $7 billion to a variety of nonprofit activities, including the arts, education, health, human services, the environment, disaster relief, community and economic development, among others. They're called community foundations. Our guests this week are Kevin van Bronkhorst, executive director of Community Foundation's National standards. Welcome, Kevin.

***Kevin van Bronkhorst***

Thank you. Glad to be here.

***Salvatore Alaimo***

West Miller, director of philanthropic services, Fremont Area Community Foundation and Wes is a Grand Valley State alumni. He got his master's in public administration with us. Welcome, Wes.

***Wes Miller***

Thank you.

***Salvatore Alaimo***

Another Grand Valley alumni. Jocelyn Hines is the senior community investment officer for the Community Foundation for Muskegon County. Welcome, Jocelyn.

***Jocelyn Hines***

Thank you for having me.

***Salvatore Alaimo***

And Jocelyn also got her master's degree in public administration with us. So, I thought we'd start with just a general question. When we think of the ideal of civil society in the way that I communicated with you in advance of this show, and we think about what community foundations do. How would you personally describe the value proposition that community foundations offer to civil society?

***Kevin van Bronkhorst***

I can start as kind of more, more an outsider.I'm not I don't personally work at a community foundation. I work with community foundations.And so from my perspective, the thing that's really valuable about foundations is their placement.The fact that they are place based. They know the community better than any other type of organization, and they are just well positioned.

***Jocelyn Hines***

Yeah, I would definitely piggyback off of what Kevin said, that we are definitely place based. I often tell my grantees that, you know, and I've heard my president here say it before that, you know community foundations can be a little more entrepreneurial when it comes to how we invest in community. I like some of the state and federal, you know, programs that people may take advantage of. You know, we really since we are putting boots on the ground and place-based organizations, that we really can cater to the needs of the communities that we serve and ways that traditional federal or state or even some bigger foundations can't necessarily serve community.

***Wes Miller***

And I think the great thing about that is that we can be so adaptable with anything that arises in the community because we have such broad missions to simply improve the place that we live. So, I think we saw that certainly with COVID and you see it in other communities when there's a crisis. Community foundations can quickly pivot. But of course, also we have this long term stable funding that allows us to stick with other issues for many years.

***Salvatore Alaimo***

So, Kevin, let's now segue into the standards, because I think the standards to some degree will speak to that value proposition in a nice way the three of you just described. So tell us about the standards in your work with the Council on Foundations here.

***Kevin van Bronkhorst***

Yeah. So, community foundations, national standards, that's a that's a program that's developed by the field and the Council on Foundations is supports the program, but the program has its own board. It's run by community foundation leaders across the country. And really, these experts have helped develop the, what we consider to be the best practices for community foundations. So accreditation with national standards really represents that rigorous, sector driven set of best practices that really exceed federal and state minimum requirements, demonstrate accountability and excellence to the community.

***Salvatore Alaimo***

And how, how do these foundations get these standards?

***Kevin van Bronkhorst***

You have certain criteria and then they, they guess they come forward and decide that they want to have that, quote, seal of approval and, and meet those standards. Right. So as Jocelyn and Wes can probably attest to, this is a very rigorous process. Foundations are really submitting all of their legal compliance documents and evidence that they are adhering to their policies. And our experts review everything and ensure that they meet the key elements and requirements. Once a foundation gets through that process and receives that approval, they have demonstrated that not only do they have the compliant legal compliance documents, but also that they are hearing to those practices.

***Salvatore Alaimo***

So just another follow up point here. If they get the standards met, is a seal of approval also something they should explicitly convey to their communities, I guess on their websites, the materials so that someone considering working there, serving on the board, donating and volunteering, and in some way to know that that foundation has met those standards.

***Kevin van Bronkhorst***

Yeah. So that's that's a good point. Historically, national standards has been a more more internally focused and especially Capitol Hill focused, ensuring that our representatives understand the way that can be foundation, self-governance and police themselves. It hasn't so much been a what we consider what we might call like a marketing type opportunity or something that would necessarily attract a donor base. I do think that there is value there for members of the community to understand what this program is and what it means to be able to lay that seal.

***Salvatore Alaimo***

Thank you. Let's go to Wes for a moment here. What, what can we do to get the community to understand that community foundations can be more than just a funder, more than an institution doling out money.

***Wes Miller***

Well, I think that's a great question, an issue to bring up. And I know when I was just learning about community foundations through sort of a 101 type presentation. It was described as a three-legged stool. So, you certainly have the grantmaking. Then you have the asset development that allows you to build the endowment. But then the other part of that stool is community leadership. And I think of community foundations as really having a bird's eye view. We have a lot of different philanthropists, local people that want to improve the community coming to us. We hear from them, but of course we're also a funder, so we receive many grant applications from all sorts of different organizations. So sometimes that results in us seeing an opportunity that goes beyond any one grant and allows us to convene stakeholders around an issue to bring people together and hopefully achieve something that wouldn't have been possible, had a community foundation not been in place to see those threads and bring them together.

***Salvatore Alaimo***

Jocelyn What can you say about that, and can you give us a flavor for what maybe are some of the pressing issues in Muskegon County?

***Jocelyn Hines***

Yeah, so definitely, you know, going off of what was said about the three legged stool,

I definitely think that's how we think of our work that we do here at the Community Foundation for our Muskegon County as well. I think the community leadership has taken a tremendous it's pretty much a front runner. And the work that we're currently doing as we are the sixth largest community foundation in the state, but a lot of our investments are catered and donor impact, right? So, we don't necessarily have a lot of discretionary funds to kind of cater to all of the needs of our current community. But, we are placed in our community in a way that people can they are come to the table right when the foundation calls to have meetings about issue. And we can really be thought partners with a lot of our community partners in regards to some of the needles that we're trying to move for at some of the Muskegon County initiatives like. So, our three strategic goals right here in Muskegon County is community economic development, education, educational equity, lifelong literacy, as well as the varsity equity and inclusion. And we've had our hands in a lot of different conversations and really took leadership in some of those initiatives. I mean, especially on the educational front, right? We're working with our local intermediate school district to make sure that schools have literacy coaches right. We're working with the public school to make sure pre-K for all is free. We've been in the daycare space. We've done some business supports where we've created funds that work with partners who want to really invest in entrepreneurs of color and different things like that as well. So definitely foundations can really be thought partners for a lot of the community and the partners that we're working with as well. And sometimes, you know, we talk about it all the time here in Muskegon is that, you know, our discretionary funds are pretty limited. And regardless of what we are able to actually give financial resources to, but we're on rich and, you know, partnerships. We're rich in education, we're rich in knowledge and really sharing of resources and getting partners who may not see themselves working on collaborative work to get together and say, hey, let's move the needle for on this particular issue. So I think community leadership has been a strong asset that we've been utilizing here at the foundation in Muskegon.

***Kevin van Bronkhorst***

I just, I just, sorry, I just want to say that I always appreciate listening to people who are actually doing that on the groundwork, because community leadership is certainly one of the core components of a community foundation. And anybody any community foundation that goes through this accreditation process is certifying that fact, that community leadership defines what a foundation is. And so being able to hear what that actually means in practice is really great.

***Jocelyn Hines***

Yeah. And yeah. Kevin And even just kind of defining what community leadership means and what capacity. So, I feel like for so long community leadership look like partner with some of our bigger partners, like our local school districts and our bigger organizations like our United Ways and our goodwill organizations that have great capacity. And in my current role, something I'm really passionate about is that who are the communities that we're not serving that we can also be thoughtful partners with. So, we've developed better relationships with our faith partners. We'll build a relationship with our neighborhood association. We're building a relationship with our mom and pop mentorship programs as well, because we know they have access to populations that don't come into our doors every day. But they're making an impact in their individual communities. So not only are we focusing on some of those systemic changes, but we also know that we need to be kind of boots on the ground with our smaller organizations as well.

***Salvatore Alaimo***

So, I'm hearing that value added that sort of west let listen to and that you just you carry the ball on this one here Jocelyn. Initiator, convener, community leader, facilitator, initiator. Right. So beyond just being the granting of money and going above and beyond that. So, kind of segueing to you. Kevin for a moment. You did mention it's a rigorous process. Do you have any more stories to share with us or any particular standards that seem to be really tough or hard to attain?

***Kevin van Bronkhorst***

I don't know if I would, I would, I would frame it that way necessarily. I think for some foundations, especially in smaller developing foundations, the struggle is really finding that time and the bandwidth to go through this process. There are a lot of foundations that may not have some of the policies that are required to get through, you know, get through the social media policy, for example. And so, it's less a matter of can they do it and more do we have the bandwidth, do the commit to this? And also, as Jocelyn said, you know, the operating margins of, of a lot of these foundations are very slim. And in order to go through this process, we understand that you may not have the time or the resources to get through that finish line. And so, a large part of our job is just helping as much as we can to, to make that a reality.

***Salvatore Alaimo***

Wes, would you suggest that community foundations be learning institutions? And is this something that. It resonates with you up in the Fremont area.

***Wes Miller***

Yeah, absolutely. Learning institutions. I think you could go in two different directions with that one being learning in terms of best practices on a sector wide scale. So, I know we talked about that. Certainly, I was previously a program officer before I became involved in donor relationships, but. As a program officer, but also in philanthropic services. Seeing what's happening across the field and then being able to bring those techniques and expertise to the local community, I think that is a tremendous way to contribute as well. But then the other angle I would say would be just from the issues that are arising from the community and listening to stakeholders, learning, what are the challenges that we're really seeing become prominent. And then also what are the opportunities? So, I think that community foundations, because of their flexibility. Really benefit from learning on the ongoing basis.

***Salvatore Alaimo***

So how, how important is research to community foundations, needs assessments, things of that nature, staying on top of the trends in your communities, the demographics? Jocelyn, can you, can you speak to that?

***Jocelyn Hines***

Yeah. I mean, I think research is very important. I think it becomes evidently more important as like the years progress in regards to how we even lay out our strategic goals. So yeah, we say we want to invest in education, right? What does that mean? You know, so we may go to the data and say, Hey, third grade reading levels are low, eighth grade math levels are low. You know, how do we kind of want to move the needle on some of the issues that we're kind of focusing on? And you can only kind of do that by utilizing, you know, your local your census data and some of your national data to, to kind of, you know, assess what you've set out to outline the strategic goals, like what are we really trying to change and where we are now kind of where we want to go. So it definitely needs to be research heavy.

***Salvatore Alaimo***

So how do community foundations serve two masters? The donors, particularly if they're healthy with the donor advised funds and the community that they serve. You know, the money in, money out? How can they successfully manage what could be a tension of time and attention uh and and serve those two audiences effectively? This could be for any of you.

***Kevin van Bronkhorst***

So, I'll just say that. You know, for one, donors are the community. They are certainly an integral part of the community and they're invested in the community as well. I admit that I don't spend a lot of time thinking about the, the donor side of things. I'm much more involved in the operational regulatory angles, which I believe is what can the foundation really value in national standards? Is that where we have people on the Hill that are ensuring that our representatives are aware of the good work that these organizations are doing?

***Jocelyn Hines***

Yeah, I think that's a great question and a question that we ask ourselves all the time in regards to like how your community foundation is set up, right? So under past leadership, we right there, we don't impact that right in regards to like you as the donor us and say, what do you want to do? Like what does your investments kind of look like in the community? Like what impact do you kind of want to leave for yourself? And so we were kind of, you know, donors pick, you know, whatever they wanted to support,

whether it was the arts, whether it was their church and things like that, too, which goes back to why our discretionary funds were pretty limited because we were really pushing to do donor impact. Right. I think now we're taking a turn, where we know we need to grow our discretionary funds, right? So, we have a little more agency in the things that we can support, as well as creating opportunities for our donors to invest alongside with.

So, you know, in donor meetings, we're like, hey, we're really interested in moving the needle on education or things like that, come alongside us and invest in these programs, in these organizations that are really trying to make an impact in our community. You know, sometimes we are convincing our our donors like, Oh yeah, that's really interesting. I really want to invest in those. And sometimes they're like, I rather invest in the art museum. That's okay. That's an option too. But, we still want to have the conversation with you in regards to what things that are really going to systemically kind of change the community. So, definitely trying to grow our discretionary funds to kind of help move the needle directly. Still having the conversation with donors as well, and also the type of offerings that we offer donors, you know, for a while as a traditional donor buys fund that you can open for this amount and then you have this discretion over about how can we be more creative with giving people options to give, right? So maybe it's given at a lesser, lesser amount. Maybe it's more collective giving options that we can kind of convince our, our donors to kind of take advantage of as well. So, it's really a fine line. I do not in the development team as some of the conversations that they really have to have with some of our donors and community members. But, I think it's a balance, especially if you're really trying to grow your discretionary fund and making sure you're having several options for donors to really take it that nature.

***Wes Miller***

Now, I would just add in terms of what Jocelyn said about having several options. One thing that I like to explain to donors and other stakeholders is that there are different types of endowment funds. So as Jocelyn mentioned, the donor advised funds. There's of course discretionary funds and then there are different types that are in between those maybe so a field of interest where a donor is identifying a particular area, but saying that they trust the board to make grants to any organization within that area as well. So, there's a spectrum and a type to hopefully meet donors where they're at and also balance that with the community needs.

***Salvatore Alaimo***

So, I've noticed that many community foundations have this tagline “for good forever,” right? So, it talks about perpetuity with the understanding that we would hope that communities will be around forever, which means there's always going to be problems and issues hanging around forever. So, my question is, how do community foundations balance time and attention? Again, serving two masters, but a different form, I guess,

addressing the fires burning today versus the potential fires that are burning down the line in the future.

***Kevin van Bronkhorst***

Yeah, I think that this is this is one of those things where there has to be some, some acknowledgment that, um, you know, there, there are problems today and there will be problems in the future and that we really shouldn't look at one at the exclusion of another. And, really the value of a community foundation is being able to accurately anticipate those problems and address them as they arise.

**Jocelyn Hines**

And yeah, go ahead Wes.

***Wes Miller***

Well, yeah, and I was going to add mentioned that fortunately it doesn't have to be either or because especially when community foundations are established, they have the assets. And we already talked about community leadership capabilities to impact issues today. But, then as we become trusted partners in the community and stakeholders, see what is possible through community partnerships with the community foundation, it can also build that value proposition that, you know, invest with the community foundation, continue to grow the endowment, because that allows the community to address unforeseen things that obviously we can identify now.

***Jocelyn Hines***

Yeah, I definitely agree with Wes and I think it's that definitely the way your foundation is set up, right? So we see a lot more of our donor advisors kind of catering to the today's needs or whether it's food, whether it's transportation or housing or things like that, to where we can focus more of our discretionary funds on making systemic change, which we know is not a not going to be fix tomorrow problem. But, we also are flexible enough in our funding that if like emergency needs transpire, that we have opportunities to really cater to some of those right now needs as well. But, we try to balance like we know our donors are really interested in the food trucks and things like that too, that they're going to really put their resources behind that. So, what can we do with this small pot of money so really affect systems?

***Salvatore Alaimo***

But Kevin, you were saying earlier that the Hill is interested in what community foundations are doing. So that kind of gives us a federal level picture. And it reminded me of my visit to the Community Foundation up on Mackinac Island. So, I was talking to their CEO and she said that they have a regular spot on the town council meetings where they report out what they're doing so that the local government knows what they're doing and the citizens know what they're doing. So, my question is, what should the relationship be for community foundations and the local governments in their communities?

***Kevin van Bronkhorst***

Yeah, I think that's a that's a great question. And it really comes back to community leadership. And I would say that, you know, we talk about the Hill. I would say that there isn't a lot of scrutiny over what community foundations are doing, specifically because the concern isn't with community foundations. It's typically with other entities that, you know, since there is no IRS definition of what a community foundation is, it really was the imperative of the field to come up with that definition. And so, a large part of the council's work, especially with our with respect to the government affairs team, is educating our representatives and regulators at Treasury about community foundations and what it is that they do.

***Salvatore Alaimo***

So how about you, Wes and Jocelyn? What can you describe what the relationship is between your community foundation and your local government?

***Wes Miller***

I would say definitely a partner, and that's one of the really gratifying things, is to see those partnerships come together, particularly around key community needs. I know one need that is not unique here in Newaygo County is a housing shortage. And so just this year, in fact, the county Board of Commissioners entrusted $1,000,000 with our community foundation, and then we added a half a million dollars to that to create a new fund that is hopefully going to remove some structural barriers to housing projects happening in local communities. So that was at the county level. And then through that, though, we are in conversations with the municipalities that actually have these projects happening in their backyard. So, working in very close partnership with government officials. And I think that's really great to see, you know, across sector lines.

***Jocelyn Hines***

Yeah, I agree. Similar. I mean, housing is a big issue in our county. So, we've been partnering with our county government as well as some of our city to do a housing needs assessment. So, we're kind of in the process of that as well. And also just on some economic development initiatives, we've been working with our local cities, and we also see our school districts and their municipal structure as a partner in some of the work that we're doing. As you may know, one of our communities in Muskegon County is Muskegon Heights, and they really have a large debt over their head and it has really been stagnant. And the education that our students in Muskegon High School public schools have been receiving. So, we've been convening, you know, city school and county officials as well as some of our state officials to really come up with the plan of how can we address the debt. That's really the kids are suffering from that debt because of the tax base in that community, as well as some of the educational needs that they have. So, partnerships with our local municipalities is something that we're working on to adjust even where we're geographically located. Right. We're in the heart of downtown Muskegon and we own a theater. And so we, you know, definitely have conversations with our local chamber and economic development corporation here to say how have we really unified the space that we occupy? So therefore, we stayed on visible agencies as partners.

***Kevin van Bronkhorst***

Yeah, and I think that that is also testament to, to the work that community foundations do, the fact that a lot of, you know, local and even state entities see community foundations as partners. There are several states that offer, you know, tax credits or they offer gaming funds specifically to accredited community foundations. And it's just that sense that there is recognition that that this is a good place for public for public trust.

***Salvatore Alaimo***

All right. So, the three of you may disagree with what I'm about to say, and that's perfectly fine. We can disagree on this podcast. But, I would bet that if I just plucked ten citizens randomly in any community and line them up and asked them what a community foundation is, I would bet maybe only two out of the ten could tell me what it is. So, A, is that a problem? And B, if you think it is, given that the first word in the name is community, what should we do about that?

***Wes Miller***

Well, I don't doubt your anecdotal statistic Sal, and I know in terms of what to do about it, our staff has really bought into the idea of storytelling. And so, whether it's in our newsletters or our annual reports, we try to tell stories about both the impact side of grants and community leadership, but also the donor side of here's some local people in a relatively small county or community here in rural Newaygo County. When we're using images combined with those stories, a lot of times people will recognize those faces. And so, something we actually do to just boost it to one higher degree is grab some billboard space and put those faces and just a tagline up on some local billboards along with our logo. So hopefully over time, the recognition grows.

***Jocelyn Hines***

Yeah, I think I think you're right in regards to I don't think a lot of people know what a community foundation is. I mean, I started working in philanthropy six years ago and I kind of told you prior to my time working at the community foundation what philanthropy was a community foundation work. So, I really think it's a big issue. I think it's an issue locally. And even on the flip side of that, right, some people that kind of are a little familiar with our work and the lack of trust there found like people don't have foundations. Like I have conversations with community members all the time because I think sometimes people think foundations are the space for white rich folks, right? And they don't necessarily see themselves and the work that community foundations are doing. So not only do we need to educate the community on what actually community foundations are, what they do, but we also need to continue to be a trust the entity for our community to come in. And if they have ideas, you know, need access to resources beyond funding that they really see as a trusted partner in the community and that the work that they're trying to move forward soon. So, it's education and building trust with community is something that's really important.

***Kevin van Bronkhorst***

And I think that's a great point as well. One of one of the national standards is ensuring that your board reflects community being served. And that, I feel is incredibly important, is making sure that the right people are in the room to really represent the community and its needs in terms of. In terms of the public's understanding. I agree. Six years ago, I also wouldn't have been able to tell you what a community foundation was. And I went to college at Oregon State University, and after working at the Council for a couple of years, I went back and met up with some of the some of the leadership at Benton County Community Foundation. And Chris, Chris Quaka there. He took me around town and showed me all the work they were doing. And it was just unbelievable. It was it was eye opening to me because here is this kind of microcosm of all this work that's going on around the community that the community foundation is directly involved in that I otherwise wouldn't have known about. And it's for that reason also that I see community foundation just the two words as kind of a brand name. And this is also why it's really important, in my opinion, to kind of not to harp on accreditation, but the idea that, that knowing that you have met this rigorous standard and that your foundation is operating at this level is really critical, not just to the foundation itself, but to the brand of community foundations.

***Salvatore Alaimo***

So, Kevin, what let's look into the future now, based on what you've been seeing in your work, working with the standards and staying on top of the operational side of what community foundations are doing in relation to the standards, looking to the future, what are you seeing down the road for community foundations?

***Kevin van Bronkhorst***

Yeah. So, we're always looking at new resources, for example, things that we can deploy in the field. And, you know, as I said before, community foundations are often working on, on the day to day and we have the ability to kind of step back and look at operations and figure out what are best practices and how can we be more efficient and what resources can we provide to help community foundations reach that potential. And so anything could be made more efficient in terms of issues. There is a lot of scrutiny regarding donor advised funds. And one of the one of the elements that we've been working on and improving over time is our donor advised fund, fund activity policy, And that is ensuring that donor advised funds stay active and that there is no dormancy in these funds. And so, what that looks like is a policy that really delineates what specifically fund activity is, meaning grants going out. And what happens if a fund is dormant for a certain amount of time, three years being the upper limit? And so what you're seeing is, is really a structure and how do we communicate with the donors? How do we let them know, hey, here's a reminder of what our policy is. And then how do we activate what is that framework for activating grant making in the event that these funds are considered dormant as per the policy? This is something that is an issue anecdotally at a regulatory level. And, and we hear about it cropping up in the act and that sort of thing. But really to me it's more of a best practice. It's just ensuring that that these funds remain consistently active. And sometimes, as Jocelyn said, a lot of community foundations don't have that much discretionary fund funding. So sometimes it's a matter of reaching out to a donor and saying, you know, hey, we, this fund hasn't been active for three years. Do you still want this advisory privilege or should this, should, should this funding be reallocated towards discretionary grantmaking?

***Salvatore Alaimo***

So, we're going to close with some heartwarming stories on how your community foundations have impacted civil society in your communities. So, we'll go to you Jocelyn, first, can you recall something that stands out most for you where the efforts of your community foundation impacted the lives of the people in your community in a positive way?

***Jocelyn Hines***

Yeah. Um, I yeah, I mean, it's all any different angle that it can take, you know,

I guess I'm personally passionate about working with our place based like grassroots neighborhood association organizations, right? And so on. Prior to 2020, I started a program here at the foundation and it’s the Community Empowerment Small Grant program where we didn't necessarily have access or resources for organizations that were small, right? It was our traditional grant making that we were typically delaying.

And you had to, you know, do a lot of application in this time frame. You have to have an operating budget, a financial statement, and it was just a lot of red tape. And so, the things that how you can access funding through us and we kind of wanted to dismantle

some of the old systems that we kind of have a place for people to access funding through us. So, from the time 2020, which was probably not the best time to launch, but we did it anyway, we've been able to allocate over $80,000 to about 50 organizations here in Muskegon County that have a operating budget of way, way less than $100,000. Right. And so, we're continually building relationships, right? So it's not large grants that's going to make a major impact, right. A community. But it's just the conversations and the relationships that we've been able to really build through that program, I think have been invaluable in just getting people more knowledgeable of the work that we're doing right and getting more knowledgeable of our staff and them feeling comfortable to like, call us on the phone and have a conversation about some programs, a project. Are us seeing ourselves as really thought partners in the work that they're trying to do, building relationships with our faith partners. You know, we have tens and twenties of churches here in Muskegon County deal, and so that was a population that we weren't tapping into. So I really think, you know, I really pride ourselves in the community engagement work that we've been able to do here. And Muskegon County is what are some of the major investments we've done from the grantmaking side, like we were instrumental in, you know, building a daycare facility here in Muskegon County, right, in partnership with the YMCA and Goodwill. And it's a partnership to build a wide learning center right in regards to, you know, they went from 50 slots to 72 slots. Now they can take 92 slots. Right. We know daycare was really a concern here in our community, too. So what we're able to really cater to that need in our community when it comes to, you know, whether it's daycare, where there's transportation, whether it's business supports or things like that to really getting to the everyday people. Right. Some foundations may be set up where, you know, you see a lot of money going on in the door but really don't see how that's impacting everyday people. And so, for us to really be making those investments and really the most vulnerable population in our community, I think has been our greatest, greatest accomplishment in the last few years.

***Wes Miller***

I would go down the route of building, career focused and post-secondary culture here in our community. So, I think we've done multiple things over the last ten years, and to just list a few of them demonstrates how community foundations can flex their muscles in different ways. So going back almost ten years ago, we incubated a career in college access network for folks in Michigan. They've heard of MCan. It's part of that work that then went over to our local educational partner, and they're running that now. Then a few years later, we partnered with a new initiative, which was a local promise zone, which provides tuition free path to an associates degree. So, we were both a financial partner in that, but then also provided fundraising and marketing assistance as that was a, a brand new effort. And we didn't have all of the resources that they needed. And then five years ago, we launched and we continue to run ourselves a children's savings account called Kickstart to Career Newaygo County. And so, we're going into with a local bank, kindergarten classrooms. And then as that the kids grow older into the older classrooms as well, but really working on financial literacy, helping them understand the value of savings. And I think it's a very holistic approach. When you look at the college access network, the Promise Zone and the children's savings accounts to really changing mindsets and hopefully having our community be thinking about what career youth are moving into and then getting the education that's required for that.

***Salvatore Alaimo***

So, a great way to close with some tangible examples from both of you on how your community foundations are impacting civil society and changing people's lives in a positive way in your communities. I want to thank my guests today, Kevin Van Bronkhorst, executive director of Community Foundations, National Standards. Wes Miller, director of Philanthropic Services, Fremont Area Community Foundation. And Jocelyn Hines, Senior Community Investment Officer, Community Foundation for Muskegon County. Thank you for a wonderful, engaging discussion today.

**Closing music**

***WGVU’s Jennifer Moss***

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**Closing music fades.**