Fall 2025 Issue

THE DIFFERENCE



DONOR FEATURE

ROOTED IN GRATITUDE

When Bob and Karen Vandervaart moved to Canton decades ago for Bob's engineering role at The Timken Company, they never expected the move would define the rest of their lives.

Bob, who grew up in Illinois, and Karen, originally from Michigan, had no local ties to the area. But what began as a practical career decision quickly grew into something much more—an opportunity to build a life, raise a family and plant deep, lasting roots.

Together, they raised six children in Canton, embracing the everyday rhythms of family life—youth soccer games, swim meets, school concerts and neighborhood gatherings.

Over the years, Canton became more than just where they lived—it became part of who they are. It's a place that helped shape their children, gave them lifelong friendships and provided countless opportunities along the way.

"It's been a great place to live and raise a family," shared Bob. "The community has provided a lot for our family. We want to give back and make it a great place to live."

That deep sense of gratitude is what continues to guide the Vandervaarts in their philanthropy and service.

In 2019, they established a Donor Advised Fund through Stark Community Foundation as a way to support the causes they care most about—from youth programs and education to healthcare and the arts.

It helped streamline their giving, allowed them to bunch donations for tax purposes and, most importantly, gave them an intentional way to stay engaged in the community they love.

"It fits us like a glove," said Bob, when describing why they enjoy having a Donor Advised Fund.

Karen added, "I love that we can pick and choose where our dollars go."

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OUR FAMILY TREE

16 new charitable funds were recently established through Stark Community Foundation.

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ANIMAL EDUCATION FOR ALL

The Akron Zoo offers up-close animal encounters, immersive exhibits and adventure perfectly suited for young families.

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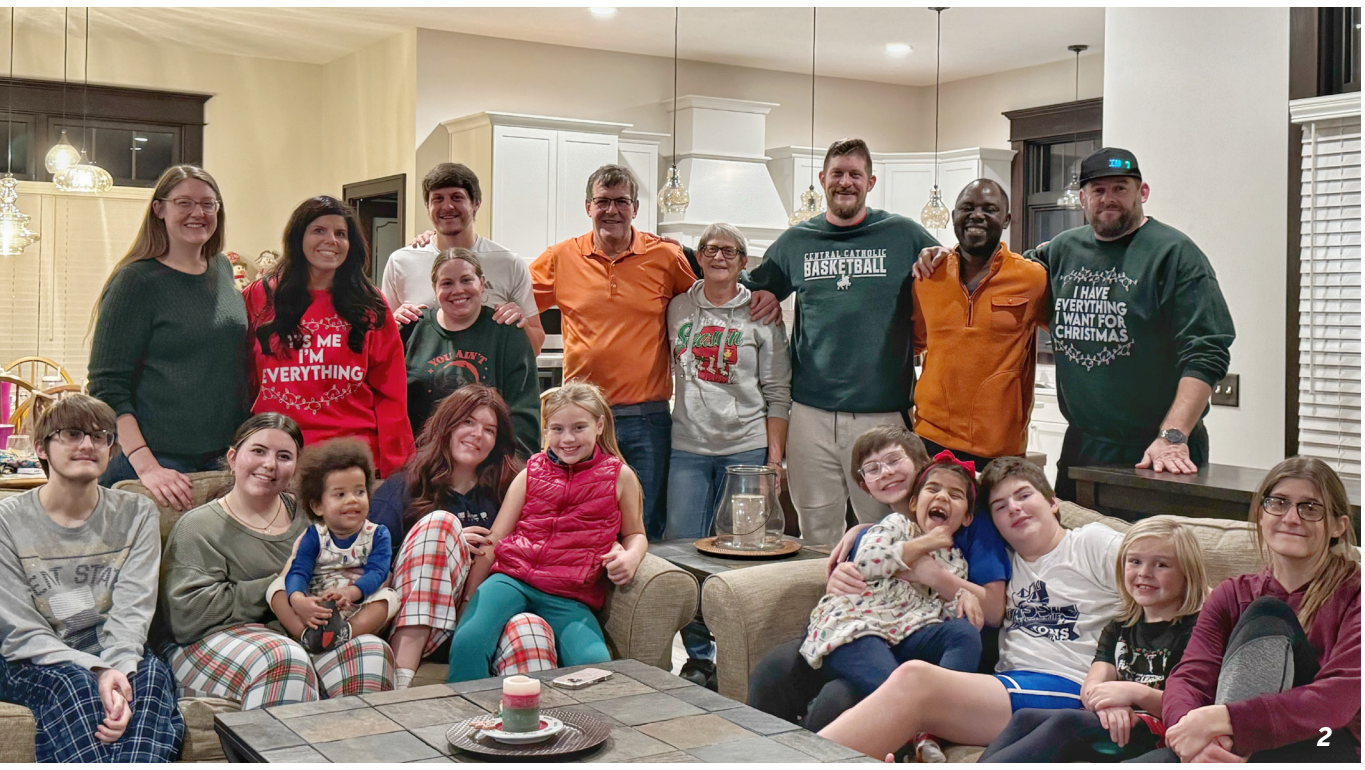
STARK COUNTY FACT SHEETS

A collection of new Stark County fact sheets are available to help people understand the areas where they live and work.

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NONPROFIT DIRECTORY

Our online Nonprofit Directory showcases 100+ local nonprofits and their missions, programs and geographic footprint.



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Through the **Bob and Karen Vandervaart Charitable Fund** at Stark Community Foundation, they support dozens of organizations doing impactful work—many of which they've known for years, like United Way of Greater Stark County, ArtsinStark and the Dragon Dream Team.

Bob's connection to United Way dates back to his early days at Timken, some 40 years ago, when employee giving campaigns introduced him to the nonprofit's work. Over the years, he's deepened his involvement by serving on its Impact Committee, helping guide where resources can make the greatest difference.

The arts have always been an integral part of the Vandervaarts' story. With musicians, painters and makers on both sides of the family, their support of ArtsinStark comes from a place of personal appreciation—and a desire to ensure the next generation has access to the same kind of creative expression.

Their giving also reflects their lived experiences. The Dragon Dream Team holds special significance for Karen, a breast cancer survivor who has paddled for 18 seasons with Ohio's first dragon boating team for survivors.

A physically demanding water sport rooted in Chinese tradition, dragon boating involves teams paddling in unison in long, narrow boats. Karen has traveled across the country and even internationally with her team, finding healing, strength and camaraderie in the water—with Bob always cheering her on from the shoreline.

Another way the Vandervaart family stays connected to the community is through Stark Community Foundation's Partners in Giving program. It's an easy, impactful way for donors to learn about a wide variety of local projects and decide which ones to fund.

"We've been introduced to organizations we never knew existed," Karen shared. "It's helped us better understand the needs in our own backyard."

Whether it's purchasing a new refrigerator for Urban Ark's food pantry, empowering middle schoolers to explore and launch community-focused ideas through TomTod Ideas or supporting Prevent Blindness Ohio's vision outreach program, the Vandervaarts value the flexibility to make contributions—at whatever level they choose.

"Through this program, you don't have to contribute a lot to make a big impact," they shared.

Giving back isn't something the Vandervaarts only do financially. They roll up their sleeves and volunteer in Stark County and in their faith community, quietly working to make their hometown even stronger.

At Faith United Methodist Church in North Canton, Karen is active in the sewing ministry, a group of dedicated women who create hats, gloves, quilts and adult bibs for those in need. Most recently, the ministry worked together to make nearly 100 pillowcases for children in foster care. In addition, both Bob and Karen help with the church's monthly food distribution in Crystal Park as part of its outreach ministry.

Their approach to giving—whether through dollars or time—is rooted in compassion and humility.

"We see it as a hand up, not a hand out," they say, a belief they've passed down to their six children and a growing number of grandchildren.

That legacy is already being lived out in meaningful ways. Their son, Pete, and daughter-in-law, Laura, recently served as a lead couple for Canton Prom, an adult fundraiser benefiting the Canton Palace Theatre's 100th anniversary. Their daughter, Kathleen, has dedicated her career to advocating for youth and adults in the Appalachian region, while one of their twins, Jean, works as a teaching artist—sharing the joy of artmaking with children and families. All of their children give back in their own way, using their time, talents and careers to carry forward the values of generosity and service they grew up with.

Through it all, the Vandervaart family remains grounded in a simple truth: when a community gives you so much, you give back in return.

For them, philanthropy is not just about generosity—it's about gratitude, legacy and love for the community they call home. And as their family grows and the needs of the community evolve, so too will their giving—always guided by a desire to make a difference, wherever it's needed most.



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Photo Captions

Cover photo: *Bob participating in Stark Community Foundation's 60th Anniversary Community Mural Paint Day*

2: *Vandervaart Family Photo*

3: *Bob and Karen Vandervaart at the Foundation's 2025 Spring Donor Gathering*

4: *Karen dragon boating with Ohio's Dragon Dream Team*



4

OUR FAMILY TREE

16 charitable funds were established through Stark Community Foundation from January 1 through June 30, 2025.

Subfunds (3)




John H. and Evelyn L. Ashton Philanthropic Fund
FIELD OF INTEREST FUND

The late John H. and Evelyn L. Ashton were instrumental in the creation and development of many Carrollton nonprofit organizations and activities as residents and business owners in the community since 1932. John devised a way in which he and Evelyn could continue to give back to Carrollton and the Carroll County community.



Robert E. and Mary B. Basta Philanthropic Fund
COMMUNITY CHARITABLE FUND

The Community Charitable Fund received the assets of their charitable gift annuity.

Bridge Point Endowment Fund
ORGANIZATION ENDOWMENT FUND

Established in 2025 by Bridge Point Community Services, this endowment fund provides a lasting source of support to help south-central Stark County residents meet everyday needs, bridging the gap where community resources and services may fall short. Income from this fund will help fund Bridge Point's resource center, thrift store, educational opportunities and volunteer efforts, ensuring essential support is always within reach.



Bruce and Crystal Burgett Memorial Scholarship Fund
SCHOLARSHIP FUND

This scholarship fund was established by the Carrollton Farmers Exchange in memory of Bruce and Crystal Burgett, two longtime supporters of the company and the local agricultural community. Bruce served as general manager of the Exchange from 1997 to 2013, and he and Crystal spent their later years together on their farm just outside Carrollton. Crystal passed away in 2019, followed by Bruce in 2024. In recognition of Bruce's years of leadership and the couple's shared commitment to agriculture, this scholarship supports students from Carrollton, Edison or New Philadelphia high schools who plan to pursue a degree in an agriculture-related field—a meaningful tribute to the Burgetts' legacy.



Mark J. DeChellis Charitable Fund
DESIGNATED FUND

After a 26-year career in banking, Mark DeChellis retired as a vice president of FirstMerit Bank. Over the years, he dedicated his time and resources to helping nonprofit organizations in our community, including museums and heritage societies, North Canton Knights of Columbus, Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, local hospitals and colleges, The First Tee of Canton and the Unique Club Scholarship Fund. This charitable fund provides financial support to local organizations and initiatives that mattered most to Mark.



David A. and Pamela A. Gault Charitable Fund
DONOR ADVISED FUND

Hoover Company executive David Gault and his wife, Pamela, created a charitable fund to give back to the institutions and causes that have played a meaningful role in their lives, including Otterbein University and Walsh University.



Jack Halkides Music Scholarship Fund
DESIGNATED FUND

Proceeds from a 2013 event honoring the life and musical legacy of longtime local band leader, Jack Halkides, were donated to create a fund in his honor. This fund provides annual support to the Canton Symphony Orchestra to help nurture the musical aspirations of our community's youth.



David B. Klausner Memorial Fund
DESIGNATED FUND

A proud member of the U.S. Navy, David B. Klausner built a career as an electrician for the Hoover Company for 30 years before spending 15 years in maintenance with Canton City Schools. David had a natural way of connecting with youth, always ready and willing to lend a helping hand. After his unexpected passing in 2024, his daughters, Kelli, Kim and Caitlin, established a scholarship to honor his memory and continue his legacy of kindness and selflessness. Each year, scholarships are awarded to graduating seniors from Canton City Schools to pursue trade school or community college—ensuring that David's commitment to both young people and the skilled trades lives on.

Stewart's Caring Place/Aunt Susie's Cancer Wellness Center Charitable Fund
ORGANIZATION ENDOWMENT FUND

After Aunt Susie's Cancer Wellness Center merged with Stewart's Caring Place in 2024, an endowment fund was created to guarantee ongoing funding for free support services and programs for Stark County individuals and families touched by cancer.



Olivia Sturgill Memorial Fund
DONOR ADVISED FUND

Established by her family, this fund honors the life and legacy of Olivia Sturgill. Olivia embodied love and compassion for others in her career as a hospice nurse and was selflessly dedicated to caring for her patients and their families in end-of-life care. Known for her kindness and generosity, Olivia found true joy in using her time and talents to help others. She also found tremendous joy in caring for the babies that her family fostered over the years. She got to experience the closest possible thing to being a mother, something that she looked forward to with great anticipation. Olivia, 25, passed away May 21, 2024, due to complications from diabetes, however, her spirit of generosity and service lives on through this memorial fund.

David Tomey Charitable Fund
DONOR ADVISED FUND

As part of his estate plans, David Tomey created a charitable fund to provide ongoing support to causes he cared about, such as improving healthcare, alleviating poverty, assisting the disabled and elderly and providing scholarship support.



Tyburski Family Charitable Fund
COMMUNITY CHARITABLE FUND

Created by the Unimet Charitable Trust Fund, this community charitable fund will support a number of nonprofit organizations in Stark County and beyond. Charles Tyburski, for whom this fund is named after, served as legal counsel for The Union Metal Manufacturing Company (later renamed Unimet Corporation) for many years.

Barbara A. Werner Donor Advised Fund
DONOR ADVISED FUND

Thank you to the following advisors for referring their clients to establish funds at Stark Community Foundation during the past two quarters:

Jim Contini, *Krugliak, Wilkins, Griffiths & Dougherty*
Danielle Frye, *Krugliak, Wilkins, Griffiths & Dougherty*
Frank Monaco, *415 Group*

Working together, we helped these clients achieve their charitable goals and make a meaningful impact in our community.



NONPROFIT FEATURE

ANIMAL EDUCATION FOR ALL

With up-close animal encounters, immersive exhibits and a pace perfectly suited for young families, the Akron Zoo offers all the adventure without the all-day commitment. Guests can come nose-to-nose with a lion, tong-feed a red panda, watch penguins dive, ride the conservation carousel—and still be home by nap time.

"Visiting the Akron Zoo is great for families with young children," said Elena Bell, director of marketing and events for the Akron Zoo. "They can come and enjoy the zoo and get back by nap time. We pride ourselves on our intimate experience."

Beyond the fun and photo ops, every visit supports something bigger. The Akron Zoo's mission is to connect people's lives to wildlife while inspiring lifelong learning and empowering conservation actions that protect our planet. Visitors can meet unique animals, learn their stories and discover ways to help protect them—361 days a year. The zoo is only closed for four holidays annually.

ANIMALS AND EXHIBITS

Though considered a small-to-medium-size zoo, the Akron Zoo offers an engaging, hands-on experience to more than 400,000 visitors each year. The 77-acre property—35 of which are developed—is home to over 2,000 animals from around the globe. The collection spans amphibians, birds, fish, invertebrates, mammals and reptiles of all sizes, from grizzly bears and snow leopards to Komodo dragons and giant Pacific octopuses.



The zoo's animal family continues to grow. In late June, Parker, a white-cheeked gibbon, gave birth to a male baby after an eight-month pregnancy that included regular ultrasounds and even "bump" photos. The zoo recently invited the community to help name the newborn, who is now named Leuco.



Visitors can explore eight distinct areas around the zoo—Curious Creatures, Grizzly Ridge, Komodo Kingdom, Legends of the Wild, Penguin Point, Pride of Africa, Wild Asia and Zoo Gardens—each designed to showcase animals in naturalistic habitats.

"Our animals are our ambassadors for their species across the whole world," said Bell. "We do our best to create natural habitats and provide daily enrichment that brings out their natural behaviors."

To keep each visit fresh, the zoo regularly adds special exhibits. From May through mid-September, guests explored DinoTrek, which featured 20 life-size dinosaurs placed throughout the grounds, blending prehistoric encounters with interactive, educational fun.

Behind the scenes, around 150 year-round staff and 100 seasonal employees keep the zoo running smoothly. Animals receive exceptional veterinary care from a dedicated team that includes two veterinarians, three veterinary techs and two zookeepers.

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The Akron Zoo believes learning should extend beyond its gates. In addition to offering informal learning experiences on site, the zoo takes age-specific programs directly into the community through its mobile zoo and partnerships with local school districts, including those in Stark County.

"We have an entire education team whose sole job is to take the zoo to where people are," Bell explained.



Over the years, the zoo has developed a continuum of education programs that engage learners in a variety of STEM-focused, standards-based education programs that reach learners from preschool through high school. These offerings are organized into four categories:



1. **Foundations for Success in STEM** introduces the youngest learners to concepts through storytelling, animal encounters and hands-on activities that help them handle school day challenges like anxiety, differences and empathy–building a foundation for both academic and personal growth.

2. **Career Exposure** gives students across all grade levels the chance to imagine their futures in STEM or wildlife conservation. With opportunities ranging from classroom sessions to job shadowing and internships, these direct experiences give them firsthand experience in fields such as animal care, veterinary science, horticulture and facilities management.

3. **Problem-Based Learning** encourages students to research, design, prototype and implement real-world solutions to challenges faced by the zoo and the wider community.

4. **Out-of-School Experiences** extend learning beyond the classroom with summer camps and family-engaged opportunities that help bridge learning gaps during school breaks.

Together, these programs allow learners of all ages to connect with animals, science and conservation in ways that spark curiosity, build empathy and strengthen problem-solving skills—both inside the zoo and throughout the community.

SUSTAINABILITY

At the Akron Zoo, conservation is more than a mission—it's a way of life.

The zoo was the first in the world to use an aerobic composter, affectionately known as Big Hanna, which transforms organic waste into nutrient-rich compost and diverts tons from landfills each year. By reducing methane emissions, its composting program helps combat climate change, benefiting both the local community and wildlife worldwide. Even the zoo's paper products are corn-based and enrich the soil in the zoo's flower beds.

"We are looking to be more sustainable to conserve our natural resources," added Bell. "Something as simple as collecting aluminum cans—we recycle them and use the funds to plant trees in the Brazilian rainforest. This is a small way for people to make a big impact."

The zoo continues to find innovative ways to shrink its environmental footprint, from installing solar panels and low-flow water fixtures to adopting other eco-friendly practices—proving that even small changes can have a big impact.

FUTURE PLANS

The Akron Zoo is taking a major leap forward with the construction of a new, state-of-the-art, 11,949-square-foot animal hospital. Replacing a 30-year-old facility originally built for just 100 animals, the nearly $12 million hospital will open in 2026 and include specialized spaces for birds, hoofstock, primates, large carnivores and other species. The new hospital will also feature a modern surgery suite and an intensive care unit—elevating the zoo's ability to deliver the best animal care.

Looking further ahead, the zoo's next capital campaign, Reaching New Heights, will expand the campus by 10 acres by 2028. A centerpiece of the campaign will be a new African savannah exhibit—complete with giraffes and other iconic species—giving guests even more opportunities for unforgettable encounters.

GET INVOLVED

There are various ways to connect with the Akron Zoo: you can plan a visit to experience the animals firsthand, attend special events like seasonal celebrations and tours, spend time volunteering and donate to animal care, conservation and education efforts.

To learn more, visit **akronzoo.org**

Photo Captions

Header: *Red panda*

Left: *White-cheeked gibbons*

Center: *Residents experiencing the DinoTrek Exhibit*

Right: *Third graders from Louisville City Schools visiting the zoo*



LOCAL ROUNDUP

GOOD COMMUNITY NEWS

Stay up to date with our community's latest news.

CANTON BALLET CELEBRATES ITS 60TH SEASON

The Canton Ballet is celebrating its 60th season with performances that honor the past and embrace the future—from cherished classics like *The Nutcracker* to new works, including *The Greatest of All Time*. Committed to providing valuable artistic experiences, the milestone season kicks off in October with *Peter & the Wolf*, accompanied live by 36 Canton Symphony Orchestra musicians. For the first time, public performances of this piece will be offered at Umstattd Hall and narrated by a Pro Football Hall of Famer. The season celebrates the community support that has shaped its journey and will drive its future. Learn more at **starkcf.org/cantonballet**





SAVING LOCAL LIVES WITH CPR TRAINING KITS

In the event of a cardiac arrest, survival depends on immediately receiving CPR from someone nearby. The American Heart Association recently extended its Nation of Lifesavers programming throughout Stark County by connecting partnering organizations and community members with CPR kits to educate on the importance of life-saving CPR for infants, children and adults. With support from Stark Community Foundation, the kits are now available at nine different partnering organizations located in areas where training is not already accessible or affordable. Learn more at **www.starkcf.org/cprkits**

DOLLY PARTON LIBRARY AT AKRON-CANTON AIRPORT

Families traveling through the Akron-Canton Airport have a new opportunity to turn travel time into story time, thanks to a unique partnership between the Akron-Canton Airport and Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Stark County, managed by Stark Library. When passing through the airport, young children can now select a free book from the bookcase to accompany their travels. This partnership encourages families to use travel time to engage in shared reading with young children and create meaningful learning opportunities. Learn more at **starkcf.org/airportlibrary**





HOUSING SUPPORT FOR HOMELESS VETERANS

Honor Home, a transitional housing initiative of Axess Family Services, officially broke ground in August on a renovation project that will strengthen support for Stark County veterans experiencing homelessness. With support from Stark Community Foundation, the renovation will combine two existing facilities into one upgraded building in Canton and will expand its ability to serve up to 25 veterans of any gender. The new Honor Home will feature 25 private bedrooms—each with its own bathroom—offering residents both the privacy and security they deserve while allowing the nonprofit to reach more individuals in need. Learn more at **starkcf.org/honorhome**

TWO MILLION DIAPERS DISTRIBUTED

Heart of Ohio Diaper Bank marked a major milestone in June: distributing its two millionth diaper to families in need across the region. Founded in 2019, the nonprofit serves eight counties through 31 partners, providing free diapers monthly to help ease the burden on low-income families. Its mission is simple but vital—to offer support to families in times of need by providing access to diapers, period supplies and other essentials. The nonprofit reached this achievement with the dedication of its volunteer network of all ages. Learn more at **starkcf.org/diaperbank2million**



COMMUNITY RESOURCES

STARK COUNTY FACT SHEETS

Stark Community Foundation recently curated a collection of 23 place-based data fact sheets plus a countywide overview to help residents, nonprofits and community leaders better understand the areas where they live and work.

As a community foundation, we believe data is a valuable tool for informing decision-making and helping people better understand local needs and opportunities. These place-based fact sheets provide a snapshot of each community using data from six key categories: demographics, economic stability, housing, employment + education, health and connectivity.

Whether you're deeply engaged in data or just beginning to explore its value, these fact sheets offer insight into individual communities as well as Stark County as a whole. Because every neighborhood tells a different story, we encourage you to explore the fact sheets that align with your interests or work—and form your own interpretation of the data.

Here's a quick look at some Stark County data highlights:

DEMOGRAPHICS
The population is **373,764** residents.

ECONOMIC STABILITY
The median household income is **$65,740**.

HOUSING
The homeownership rate is **68.6%**.

CONNECTIVITY
4.5% of residents have internet access but no subscription.

HEALTH
31% of residents live alone.

EDUCATION
92.8% of residents have a high school education.

EMPLOYMENT
The top occupations are in educational services, health care and social assistance, employing **23.7%** of the workforce.

Understanding where we are today is a key step in building a stronger, more informed tomorrow. Download and explore all 24 fact sheets and other reliable, place-based insights, research and reports on our Community Data Hub at **starkcf.org/data**



See the big picture—check out Stark Community Foundation's latest dashboard for high-level data that helps tell the story of our impact at **starkcf.org/dashboard24**

FALL 2025 ISSUE

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OUR MISSION

We partner with individuals, families, businesses and nonprofits to help them achieve their charitable goals.

OUR VISION

We seek a thriving, engaged and inclusive community.

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COMMUNITY RESOURCES

NONPROFIT DIRECTORY



Stark Community Foundation's growing Nonprofit Directory showcases more than 100 local nonprofits and their missions, programs and geographic footprint.

Explore this directory and filter by focus area to see a list of local nonprofits serving Stark and the surrounding counties. Focus areas include:

- ANIMAL WELFARE
- ARTS & CULTURE
- COMMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- EDUCATION
- ENVIRONMENT
- FAITH-BASED
- FOOD & NUTRITION
- HEALTH
- HOUSING
- SOCIAL SERVICES

Explore the Nonprofit Directory at starkcf.org/np-directory

If you are involved in an organization that is not represented in our directory, encourage them to submit a profile— it takes less than 5 minutes. Organizations eligible for inclusion in the Nonprofit Directory must be a 501(c)(3) organization or governmental entity serving Stark and the surrounding counties. Organizations can submit a profile online at starkcf.org/np-profile