Winter 2024 Issue

THE DIFFERENCE



stark community foundation

NONPROFIT FEATURE

A SYMPHONY FOR EVERYONE

Although the Canton Symphony Orchestra is now in its 87th season, many community members are still discovering that a high-caliber ensemble, featuring top musicians from across the country, exists right here at home.

The Canton Symphony Orchestra (CSO) is determined to change that. A cultural shift is underway, transforming an institution once known for exclusivity into one that embraces inclusivity. Whether you're a lifelong classical fan, a curious first-timer or someone looking for unique cultural experiences, the CSO offers something for everyone—welcoming all to share in the joy of music.

When the CSO was first founded in 1937, its prestige was accompanied by an air of formality and privilege, leaving some in the community unable to relate. Now, under new leadership, the symphony continues to reinvent itself. Its programming is evolving, blending classical masterpieces with contemporary works, highlighting pieces by women and composers of color and fostering collaborations with local organizations. These initiatives reflect one of CSO's broader goals: to create an orchestral experience that entertains and introduces people from all backgrounds to the power of live orchestral music.

This season marks more than just another year—it's a season of firsts. Matthew Jenkins Jaroszewicz begins his new role as music director, ushering in an exciting new chapter in the symphony's history after the 43-year tenure of Maestro Gerhardt Zimmermann who passed unexpectedly in June 2023. For the first time, CSO is spotlighting No. 1 symphonies in almost all of its *MasterWorks* concerts, partnering with the Players Guild Theatre and welcoming Americana roots band, The Steel Wheels, for their debut performance with an orchestra. With new music, new partnerships and new ways of engaging audiences, the CSO is making one thing clear: This music is for everyone.

"What's stopping us from playing Beethoven alongside an electric guitar?" said Rachel Hagemeier, who has served as CSO's president and CEO since 2022. "We're always pushing ourselves to find ways we can bridge the gap between orchestral music and pop culture."

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A MOTHER'S MISSION

When Joshua Potts passed away at 12 years old after battling a Hypothalamic Hamartoma, his mother made it her mission to help other kids with the medical condition in his honor.

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A LIFE OF HEALING AND ATHLETICS

Dr. James Violet's deep love for sports and unwavering dedication to healing shaped his lasting legacy in our community.

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YEAR-END GIVING TIPS AND DEADLINES

As we approach the end of 2024, now is the perfect time to think about strategies for impactful charitable giving.

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NONPROFIT HOLIDAY GIVING GUIDE

The 2024 Nonprofit Holiday Giving Guide is a curated list of year-end needs of five local nonprofits serving our community.

HIGH-QUALITY ORCHESTRA

Currently, the CSO features more than 80 professional musicians nationwide. Some musicians call Canton, Cleveland, Cincinnati and Columbus, Ohio home, while others come from cities like Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Wheeling, West Virginia and beyond.

"We aren't a community orchestra, we're an orchestra for our community," shared Rachel.

Talented musicians are selected for the CSO through a highly competitive audition process that draws hundreds of applicants. Their day jobs vary, ranging from high school teachers and college professors to bank executives, engineers and more. Harpist Nancy Paterson of Ravenna, Ohio is the longest-serving member, having played with the CSO for 47 years.
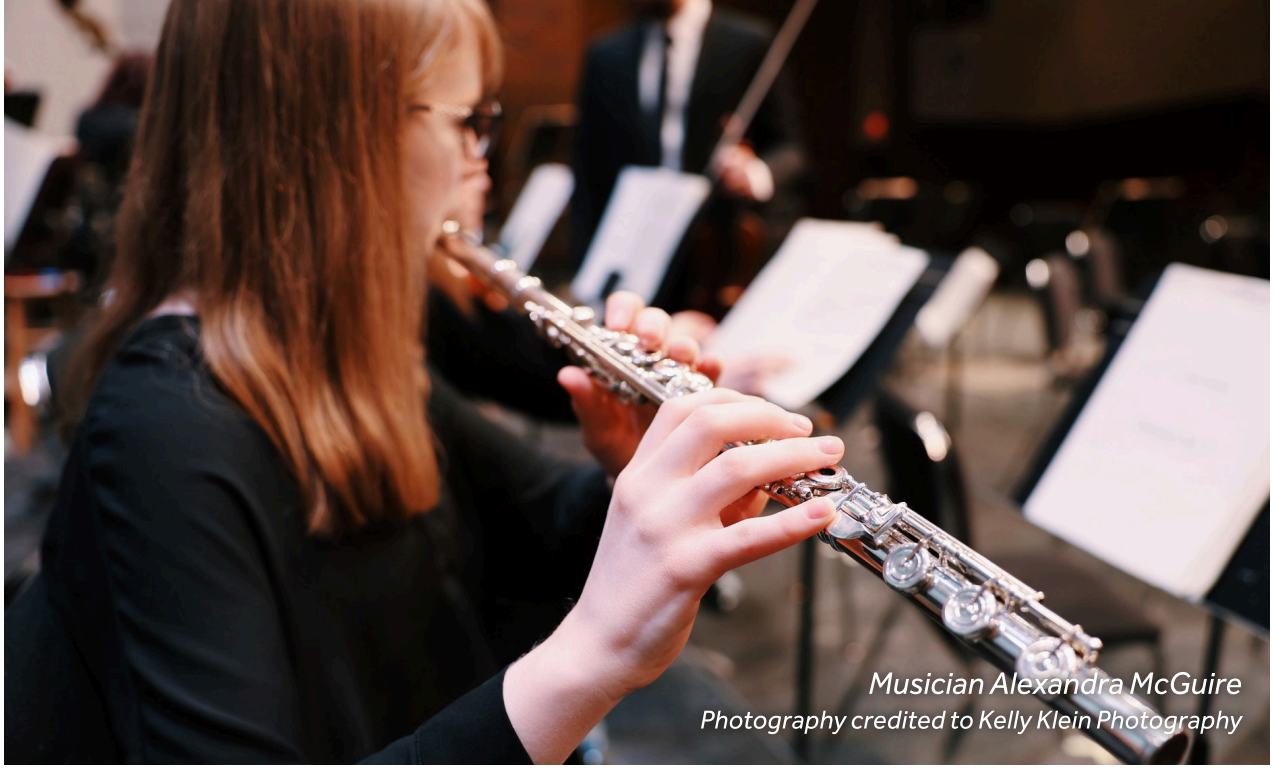
All CSO musicians are members of the American Federation of Musicians, a labor union that negotiates their contracts with the symphony every three years. The CSO operates as a per-service orchestra, meaning performers are paid for each rehearsal and concert they participate in.

Together, the 80-plus full-member orchestra performs 11 times between September and May, with additional smaller performances throughout the year.

"Being a performer here takes a lot of work," explained Rachel, who has a background in music performance herself. "During concert weeks, musicians come to Canton for rehearsals on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, practicing two hours each evening before their Saturday performance. But



President and CEO Rachel Hagemeier



Musician Alexandra McGuire
Photography credited to Kelly Klein Photography

those rehearsals aren't for learning the music—they've already spent weeks to months practicing on their own to master the pieces. Rehearsals are about perfecting the show as a group."

INNOVATIVE PROGRAMMING

As part of its mission to present live orchestral music at the highest artistic level, the CSO offers a variety of classical, holiday, casual and educational programs throughout Stark County, drawing about 35,000 people annually. With an expanding lineup, the CSO averages one event every four days.

A cornerstone of its programming is the *MasterWorks* series—seven concerts showcasing classical music across centuries, cultures and genres. The series blends traditional favorites with contemporary works, with an emphasis on overlooked and underappreciated composers. Each concert can cost upwards of $70,000. One of this year's concerts was Star Wars-inspired, highlighting music that influenced John Williams' iconic film scores.

The CSO strives to engage new audiences by blending familiar and classical music.

"Classical music is an art form enjoyed by too few," shared Rachel. "It's often overlooked because it isn't front and center in our everyday lives."

The *Employers Health Pops Series* helps bridge that gap, featuring more recognizable music. This year's lineup includes a Journey tribute, a holiday concert and a collaborative performance with the Americana roots band, The Steel Wheels.

The orchestra also explores new genres through *Divergent Sounds*, pairing CSO musicians with regional artists to perform cross-genre collaborations in hip hop, rock, alternative and more.

"We're always seeking ways to innovate and make our programming more sustainable and appealing," Rachel said.

Community partnerships are central to the CSO's mission. This season, the orchestra teamed up for the first time with the Players Guild Theatre to present *Ragtime* and expanded its collaboration with the Canton Ballet's *Nutcracker* from two to four performances, with live music accompanying the ballet. Other partnerships include *Listen at the Library* with the Stark County District Library, *Summer Serenades in the Park* with Stark Parks and *Saturday Strings* with Lighthouse Ministries.

The CSO also continues to nurture the next generation of musicians through music education programs like the *Young People's Concert*, *SymphonyLand* and *Kinder Concert*, all of which are aligned with Ohio's learning standards. Recently, it launched *Mindful Music Moments* with TheWell in Cincinnati, Ohio to introduce daily mindfulness rituals in local schools.

WHAT'S NEXT

Looking ahead, the CSO plans to strengthen its community partnerships, launch a strategic plan next summer, elevate its profile and grow its audience and funding sources.

"When our audience grows, everything else grows with it," Rachel said. "We want people to enjoy themselves and leave excited to come back."

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

- Attend an event.
- Volunteer your time.
- Donate any amount.
- Spread the word.

Learn more about the Canton Symphony Orchestra at **cantonsymphony.org**

WINTER 2024 ISSUE

OUR LEADERSHIP

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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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Engage with us on social media

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DONOR FEATURE

A MOTHER'S MISSION

In June 1999, Jill (Brooks) Potts experienced an unimaginable heartbreak—the kind no parent should ever endure. Her son, Joshua, a bright-eyed 10-year-old with a kind heart and strong will, passed away after complications from brain surgery to remove a rare, non-cancerous Hypothalamic Hamartoma.



Throughout his life, the devastating neurological condition tried to steal Josh's childhood, bringing with it excruciating headaches, bouts of rage, depression and uncontrollable laughing seizures, sometimes as many as 15 to 20 a day. Yet, despite these overwhelming challenges, Josh remained brave and determined to live as normally as possible.

From the depths of her grief, Jill found a purpose. She turned her pain into a mission to keep Josh's memory alive and spare other families from experiencing the same loss. She sought to help children like Josh live life to the fullest despite their challenges.

When local Judge Edward Elum heard Jill's vision, he connected her with Stark Community Foundation. Just a month later, Jill and Joshua's father, Larry, established the **Joshua Potts Foundation**, a memorial fund dedicated to supporting research, education and assistance for those impacted by Hypothalamic Hamartomas.

EARLY SIGNS

Jill's pregnancy with Josh was surprisingly brief—she didn't realize she was pregnant until she was five months along. Though the pregnancy and delivery were easy, Josh's early years proved to be far more challenging.

"I remember Josh crying a lot as an infant," Jill recalled. "Everyone said it was colic and that it was normal."

As Josh grew and developed, his crying turned into laughter. Everyone thought Josh was simply a happy baby. However, Jill started noticing that his laughter was becoming increasingly odd, often occurring at inappropriate times, like during church. Little did she know, these were early signs of a Hypothalamic Hamartoma.

The turning point came in the summer of 1994 when Josh was just five. Their family was on a trip to Put-in-Bay, Ohio, when they found Josh unresponsive and unconscious. He was life-flighted to Cleveland Metro Health for emergency care.

"I remember telling my husband, 'Something isn't right. I can feel it,'" Jill said.

Her instincts were correct. After a series of tests, doctors detected seizure activity, and an MRI revealed a Hypothalamic Hamartoma near Josh's optic nerve.

While a hamartoma is a non-cancerous, tumor-like growth, it has the potential to cause significant problems, like precocious puberty, cognitive impairment, rage behavior, emotional difficulties, hormone imbalances and refractory epilepsy —many of which Josh was already experiencing.

They learned that Josh's laughter wasn't out of pure joy; he was suffering from gelastic (laughing) seizures due to the hamartoma in his brain.

LIVING WITH HH

Hypothalamic Hamartomas are extremely rare and complex. In fact, at the time, Jill believed that only about 50 families worldwide were battling the condition.

"The doctors explained to me that Josh would slowly decline as he became older to the point where he would be a non-functioning adult," Jill recalled. "Josh was always being poked and prodded. Through it all, he took it like a champ."

Despite the overwhelming challenges of Josh's condition, their family was determined to give him every opportunity to enjoy a normal childhood alongside his brothers, Lawrence and Luke.

Josh spent his days engaging in activities just like any other kid. He participated in Cub Scouts, made greeting cards for his family, jumped on the trampoline, collected baseball cards, rode his bike, helped Lawrence with his paper route, went swimming, sang his favorite songs, watched basketball and indulged in his favorite treats like ice cream, butter noodles and cheesy eggs.

"He wanted to be like everyone else," Jill shared.

One of Jill's proudest moments was when Josh won his first gold medal for swimming at the Special Olympics in Columbus, Ohio. "We were so happy and proud of him," she recalled.

Josh was aware of his condition and often tried to manage his behavior, though it was usually beyond his control. After experiencing stints of rage, he would feel bad about it. During his laughing seizures, he would try to cover his mouth to muffle the sound.



"His laughing was loud," Jill explained. "People would stare, ridicule and tease him, but they didn't realize he was having a seizure. It hurts when people make fun of others without understanding what's happening. This world would be a better place if we weren't so quick to judge one another."



TREATMENT OPTIONS

Given the rarity and complexity of Josh's condition, combined with the location of his hamartoma, it wasn't easy to find a surgeon willing to operate. The family tried every available treatment, along with various medications and the ketogenic diet, but nothing helped control Josh's seizures. Often embarrassed and frustrated by his condition, Josh once told a surgeon, "I want this thing out of my head."

As Josh's cognitive abilities began to decline, the family found a surgeon at Cleveland Clinic who was willing to operate. In June 1999, Josh underwent a nearly 10-hour surgery to remove the hamartoma. The doctors reported the surgery as a success, having removed 97% of the tumor.

"It was the best thing I could have prayed for," Jill said.

Jill stayed with Josh all night in the ICU, relieved when he experienced no seizures and even woke up with an appetite—an encouraging sign. However, when she and Larry left to grab something to eat, Josh began experiencing complications from the surgery. He later passed away as a result of brain swelling.

Jill shared, "Losing him changed everyone's life in our family. Part of me died with him that day. I've learned to live with losing him, but I can tell you, you never get over it."

A LASTING TRIBUTE

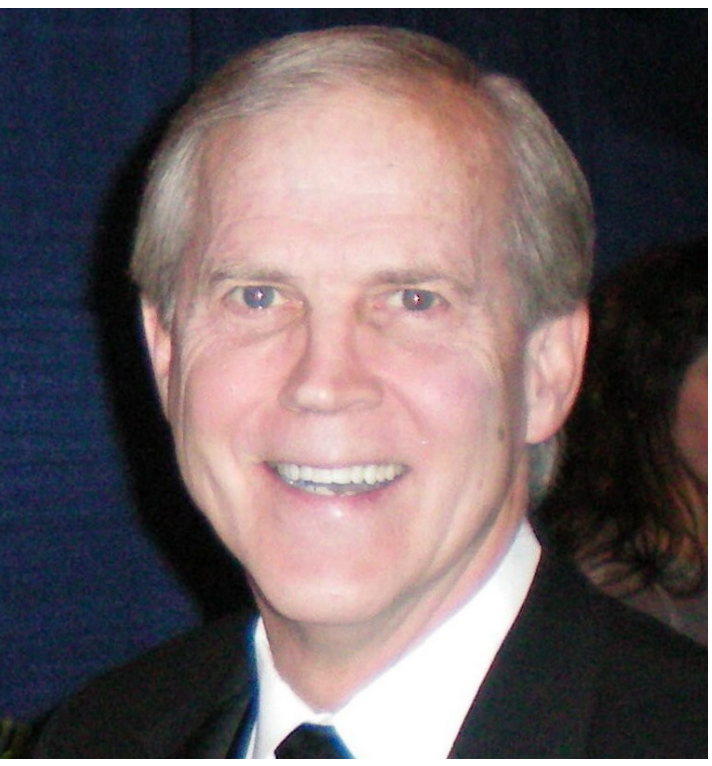
Even after Josh's passing, his kindness and selflessness continued. Josh's organs, with the exception of his eyes, were all donated to help others in need.

Looking back on the days, weeks and months after Josh's passing, Jill reflects that she didn't allow herself much time to grieve. Instead, she started her mission to keep Josh's memory alive and spare other families from enduring the same heartbreak.

Over the years, the Joshua Potts Foundation at Stark Community Foundation has supported organizations like Royal Children's Hospital, Baxter Fluency Group and St. Joseph's Hospital, helping three families impacted by Hypothalamic Hamartomas. Most recently, during the 2023 International HH Awareness Month, the foundation provided research funding to Hope for Hypothalamic Hamartomas, a volunteer-based nonprofit founded by parents of children with this rare condition.

What began as a mother's tribute to her beloved son has grown into a powerful force for change. The Joshua Potts Foundation is now a beacon of hope for those impacted by this syndrome, shining a light on the condition and offering vital support to nonprofits dedicated to helping patients and their families impacted by Hypothalamic Hamartomas.

A LIFE OF HEALING AND ATHLETICS



When Dr. James Violet's memory began to fade, his wife, Darlene, knew that she wouldn't let his deep love for sports and unwavering dedication to healing fade, too, when he passed. Instead, these passions would shape his lasting legacy in the community—formed at the intersection of the two things he cherished most besides his family: sports and medicine.

After a courageous battle with Alzheimer's that ended in 2019, Darlene channeled her grief and heartache into something enduring: a memorial fund in Jim's name through Stark Community Foundation. Today, the fund keeps his spirit alive by supporting the future generations of medical professionals and student athletes within the communities that were integral parts of their lives.

A PASSION FOR SPORTS

Jim's love for sports blossomed early in life. Growing up on his family's farm in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, he attended a small school where there were only 14 boys in his class. With such a small number of classmates, sports naturally became a central part of their lives. He played football and baseball, savoring every moment on the field.

His passion for sports continued while playing football in both high school and college at Bowling Green State University. His journey led him to medical school in Kansas City, Missouri, where he decided to specialize in orthopedics—a decision that would intertwine his love for sports with his professional calling. Jim completed his residency in orthopedic surgery at Grandview Hospital in Dayton, Ohio, and later, a fellowship in sports medicine at the Cleveland Clinic.

The Violets knew that the Canton-Massillon area has a deep-rooted sports culture, so when Dr. David Smith was searching for a partner, relocating to Canton was an easy decision. It was a meaningful move that led to Jim practicing orthopedics and sports medicine for nearly 40 years.

Throughout his medical career, Jim cared for countless athletes of all ages, but had a particular fondness for high school athletes. He served as the team physician for several local schools, including Fairless and Tuslaw. He even opened a Saturday sports clinic, where no appointments were needed, making it easier for athletes and their families to seek care after games.

Even after his official retirement, his passion for sports and medicine never waned. He served as the team physician for the Canton Charge, Cleveland Cavaliers' minor league team, for a year.

A JOURNEY THROUGH ALZHEIMER'S

After retiring, Jim began to notice a decline in his mental sharpness. Understanding the importance of early detection and planning as a medical professional, he underwent testing and was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. Darlene recalls a poignant moment when a doctor handed her a brochure on Alzheimer's support, "I told him I don't need this right now," she said. "He looked at me and said, 'But you will.'"

From that moment on, Jim and Darlene discussed their next steps together. After living and raising their two children in Canton for 40 years, the Violets decided to move closer to family. They relocated to Peoria, Illinois, where their daughter, Meredith, and her family lived. Their son, Matthew, and Jim's mother also moved with them.

"We wanted Jim to be around family for as long as possible," shared Darlene.

The timing of the move proved to be meaningful, as they were able to remain close to their loved ones during the COVID-19 pandemic when connection became even more precious.

"Alzheimer's is hard," Darlene reflected. **"You watch them slowly lose who they are."**

HONORING A LIFE WELL LIVED

Jim passed away the day before Thanksgiving in 2019. In the wake of his passing, Darlene felt a deep desire to honor his life as a compassionate surgeon and avid sports fan.

"We had different passions," she said. "I'm passionate about Shared Blessings, a nonprofit I started in Canton in 2003 and other nonprofits in the Stark County area. As for Jim, he was all about sports and medicine."

With these passions in mind, Darlene established the **Dr. James Violet Memorial Fund** at Stark Community Foundation in 2020. The fund was created to provide scholarship support to students pursuing careers in the medical field and financial assistance to nonprofits that offer sports, exercise and injury prevention programs—a fitting tribute to Jim's lifelong commitment to both sports and medicine.

Since its inception, the fund has provided $40,000 in support to various causes across Stark County, including the creation of JRC's wellness clinic that serves both seniors and children, scholarship support for students pursuing a degree in sports medicine at Kent State University and the purchase of anatomy coloring books for students in the sports medicine and rehabilitation program at R. G. Drage Career Technical Center. Jim's memorial fund has also played a role in educating young student-athletes about the importance of education during Beyond the Game's virtual summer camp during the COVID pandemic.

Darlene shared, **"Jim would have loved this project. He always believed sports were a great way to build character and teamwork, while also keeping kids out of trouble.** If kids had too much extra time on their hands, they might do something they shouldn't. He believed sports offered a lot of advantages, like the need to keep your grades up in order to play."

Looking to the future, Darlene hopes to support a potential symposium series for athletic trainers through Aultman Hospital, further extending Jim's legacy in a meaningful way.

As Darlene and their family carry out Jim's legacy, they honor his memory in a way that embodies the very values he lived by—compassion, service, education and the enduring spirit of teamwork.



5 TAX-WISE TIPS FOR YEAR-END GIVING

As we approach the end of 2024, now is the perfect time to think about strategies for impactful charitable giving. Consider these 5 tax-wise tips to help you meet your financial goals:

1. USE YOUR IRA RMD FOR TAX-FREE GIVING



If you're 73 or older and still need to take your IRA required minimum distribution (RMD), consider sending it directly to Stark Community Foundation by December 31, 2024. This distribution, called a qualified charitable distribution (QCD), can be made tax-free, which helps you avoid paying income tax on the amount you give to charity. Keep in mind that this QCD must go straight from your IRA to the Foundation—it cannot be deposited into your bank account. *Distributions to Donor Advised Funds or Supporting Foundations are not eligible.*

2. LEVERAGE APPRECIATED STOCKS

Donating **appreciated stocks** instead of cash can be a tax-efficient way to give. If you've owned stocks or other securities for more than a year, donating them directly to Stark Community Foundation allows you to avoid paying **capital gains tax** on the appreciation. This strategy ensures more of your gift goes to the causes you care about.

3. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SECURE ACT 2.0

The bipartisan legislation known as the Secure Act 2.0 offers new ways for individuals 70 1/2 and older to give while maximizing retirement savings. Now, you can make a one-time, tax-free IRA distribution of up to **$53,000** to fund a life income plan, such as a charitable gift annuity, which is offered by Stark Community Foundation. Plus, the annual limit for tax-free IRA distributions to qualified charities has increased to **$105,000** per year (or **$210,000** for married couples).

4. BUNCH YOUR DONATIONS FOR BIGGER TAX SAVINGS

Charitable bunching is a tax-saving strategy recommended by both national and local financial experts. It's a simple strategy that combines several years' worth of donations into one year to make the most of the standard deduction. If your annual charitable gifts don't typically exceed the standard deduction, bunching can help you unlock greater tax savings.

5. CREATE A DONOR ADVISED FUND FOR MAXIMUM FLEXIBILITY

If you don't have a **Donor Advised Fund (DAF)** at Stark Community Foundation, now is the perfect time to create one to support the causes you care about. A DAF is your own joint checking, savings and investment account—specifically for charitable giving. From a tax perspective, you can make a lump-sum gift to create a DAF at the Foundation, then recommend grants to your favorite charities over time.

Read more about these tips in our ***2024 Essentials for Year-End Giving*** at **starkcf.org/year-end-giving**

2024 DEADLINES

TYPE	DONATION DEADLINE	WHAT TO DO
CREDIT CARDS	11:59 p.m. EST on December 31, 2024	Make a gift online at www.starkcf.org/donate with your credit or debit card to an existing fund or new fund.
CHECKS	Postmarked by December 31, 2024 if using USPS *Must be received by 5 p.m. on December 31 if using any non-USPS mail carrier (FedEx, UPS) or delivering to SCF's office	Write a check payable to Stark Community Foundation with the fund name you want to support in the memo line.
STOCKS	Must be received by December 31, 2024	Stock transfers may take **several days** to process. First, contact VP of Advancement Bridgette Neisel at bneisel@starkcf.org or 330-454-7992 for transfer instructions and to ensure your gift is properly acknowledged, as transfers may arrive anonymously. Then, contact your brokerage firm to request a stock transfer to the Foundation.
WIRE TRANSFERS	Must be received by December 31, 2024	Wire transfers may take **several days** to process. First, contact VP of Advancement Bridgette Neisel at bneisel@starkcf.org or 330-454-7992 for transfer instructions and to ensure your gift is properly acknowledged, as transfers may arrive anonymously. Then, contact your financial institution to request a wire transfer to the Foundation.
MUTUAL FUNDS	Must be received by December 31, 2024	Mutual funds may take **several weeks** to process. First, contact VP of Advancement Bridgette Neisel at bneisel@starkcf.org or 330-454-7992 for transfer instructions and to ensure your gift is properly acknowledged. Then, contact your brokerage firm to request a mutual fund transfer to the Foundation.

GRANT DEADLINE: To guarantee charities receive your generous support in 2024, submit your grant recommendations through the Donor Portal at www.starkcf.org/donor-portal or email give@starkcf.org by **December 20, 2024**. Any grant recommendations submitted after December 20, 2024 will be received in 2025.

Stark Community Foundation can help you plan your year-end giving with ease. Contact Bridgette L. Neisel, vice president of advancement, at bneisel@starkcf.org or 330-454-7992 for more information.



DONOR FEATURE

ONE FAMILY'S COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

BUSER FAMILY FOUNDATION

From a young age, Michael Buser learned the importance of giving back, a value deeply instilled by his father. This commitment to community service has since grown into a family tradition that spans generations.

One of Michael's most vivid memories of service comes from the holidays as a 16 year-old where he and his sister, Christy, helped their father deliver food baskets to families in need. He recalls placing a large box —filled with everything for a Thanksgiving meal— on an elderly woman's table. As he glanced around, he noticed a moldy loaf of bread sitting next to it. That moment hit him hard. "It wasn't just a forgotten loaf of bread that had been sitting too long," Michael reflected. "It was on her kitchen table, still being used." This experience left a lasting mark on Michael, highlighting the true impact of their kindness.

When Michael and his wife, Jackie, began raising their daughter, Alexandra, they made it a priority to pass on their family's tradition of giving. Together, they regularly discuss community needs, volunteer with local nonprofits and award grants through the **Buser Family Foundation** at Stark Community Foundation. Their focus on meeting the needs of children has led them to support several youth-centered programs, including those at Perry Local Schools in Perry, Ohio.

Perry Local Schools has a special place in their family's hearts because of Michael's father, Art. Though Art spent his career working for Fortune 500 companies, he dedicated his retirement to running The Perry Center, an area food bank. The school district's service-learning program, which requires high school seniors to spend two hours a week volunteering with area nonprofits, allowed students to work closely with Art, developing a strong partnership with him and The Perry Center.



Over time, Art developed a deep understanding of hunger relief and community needs. Michael recalls having a powerful conversation with his father about food insecurity. They debated whether macaroni made with water cooked in a microwave was better for a child than the traditional stovetop version with butter and milk. Art's practical approach changed Michael's view: "My dad explained that macaroni made with water in a microwave was a better fit because they could make it on their own. It wasn't about which method was better—it was about making sure the child wouldn't go hungry."

Allison Trentanelli, who teaches in the Perry Service Learning Program at Perry High School, worked alongside Art for many years. She fondly remembers his kindness and generosity, particularly how he helped launch their school's Pirate Power Packs weekend food program to ensure students had meals between school days. "Art had a heart of gold," she said. "It wasn't uncommon for him to personally shop for students with specific food allergies to make sure they got what they needed."

Art's generosity extended beyond food. When he learned about a local boy experiencing homelessness and struggling with vision issues, Art didn't hesitate to take him to the eye doctor and buy him a pair of glasses—no questions asked. "That's just who Art was. He was incredible," Allison shared.

When Art passed away in 2019, he left behind a legacy of service and compassion in the Perry community. To honor his memory, Perry Local Schools established the PSL Art Buser Memorial Scholarship, which annually supports college-bound students committed to community service.

Initially, the scholarship in Art's name awarded $1,000 each year, but thanks to the continued support of Michael and Jackie, it has grown to $3,000. Remarkably, the Busers stay connected to the scholarship recipients through emails, phone calls and texts, even after they graduate.

Beyond the scholarship, the Busers have been instrumental in Perry's annual NEO Youth Summit. Funded by the Buser Family Foundation, this annual event brings together high schoolers with a passion for service with educators and nonprofits. This past September, nearly 200 participants discussed meaningful opportunities to address systemic challenges in their communities.



Michael Buser and Jackie DiNapoli-Buser with Jackie's sister Sheila Kelley and their niece LeeAnn Kelley

"The Buser family doesn't just write a check and walk away," said Allison. **"They are fully engaged in our programs and challenge us to find new ways to inspire and celebrate our students."**

Inspired by the Buser family's dedication, students at Perry have found creative ways to secure donations for the Pirate Power Packs program. With help from local orchards and matched funds from the Busers, students have ensured the program is stocked with fresh fruit through the spring.

The Buser family's commitment to education and youth extends beyond Perry. Their foundation has also supported initiatives at Plain Local Schools, where Alexandra now teaches sixth-grade math at Glenwood Intermediate School. They have funded gold and green daffodil beautification projects and other programs that empower students, such as Fierce Females, which inspires young girls to dream big while supporting each other.

They have also supported other youth-focused programs led by TomTod Ideas, Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank, Career Apprenticeship and Mentorship Program, Inc. (C.A.M.P.) and Cavaliers Youth Foundation, among others.

As their family's philanthropy continues to grow, the Busers have remained true to the values Art embodied—compassion, generosity and dedication to creating lasting change. And, with every act of kindness, every grant awarded and every student helped, one thing is certain: the Buser family's legacy will continue to be felt for generations to come.

OUR FAMILY TREE

17 charitable funds were established through Stark Community Foundation from April 1 through September 30, 2024.

Anonymous (2)

C.A.M.P. Educational Scholarship Fund
ORGANIZATION ENDOWMENT FUND

C.A.M.P., Career Apprenticeship and Mentorship Program, established this endowment fund to provide college scholarship support to students in its program who exhibit a strong desire to succeed academically.




Noble O. and Ann L. Carpenter Foundation Community Charitable Fund
COMMUNITY CHARITABLE FUND

Donor Noble O. Carpenter established this fund both as a memorial to Ann L. Carpenter, who died in 1987, and as a permanent charitable commitment to his community. Mr. Carpenter, who retired as president of Central Trust Company, died in 2024.



Greater Stark County Urban League Endowment Fund in Memory of Margaret Joan Gillespie
ORGANIZATION ENDOWMENT FUND

The Greater Stark County Urban League established an endowment fund to honor and memorialize long-time Urban League executive and passionate civil rights advocate Margaret "Joan" Gillespie. Joan devoted her time to advancing the vital programs of the Greater Stark County Urban League and her vision of a community where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. This fund ensures that Joan's belief in the power of community and equal opportunity is forever honored, securing permanent resources to uplift African Americans and the underserved and creating a lasting movement toward economic, social and health equity.



Karl F. and Maria B. Heege Charitable Fund
DONOR ADVISED FUND

Karl Heege, a longtime local educator, and Maria Heege, a nonprofit executive, created a charitable fund to support the causes they care about throughout Stark County and beyond.

Karl F. and Maria B. Heege Foundation
DESIGNATED FUND

As part of their estate plans, community-minded couple Karl and Maria Heege established a charitable foundation to provide annual support to their favorite charities: United Way of Greater Stark County, Stark County Humane Society, ArtsinStark and The College of Wooster.



Kerata Family Foundation
DONOR ADVISED FUND

Ken Kerata created a family foundation to support the organizations and initiatives that he and his family are passionate about, both in Stark County and beyond. After his passing, the charitable foundation will be passed down to his children – Jennifer Doerschuk, Christine Evilsizer, John Kerata, Kelly Laughlin, Deborah Kerata and Kevin Kerata – to continue their family's legacy of helping others.

Jim Lombardi PHS Class of '74 Memorial Scholarship Fund
DESIGNATED FUND

This fund honors the classmates of Perry High School's Class of 1974, especially Jim Lombardi, who exemplified what was best in the class as students and friends. The fund provides annual scholarship support to Perry seniors, allowing alumni to give back and help students who are following in the footsteps they once walked. The class's 50th reunion and remembrance of departed classmates inspired the establishment of the fund.

Faith K. Meiser Designated Fund
DESIGNATED FUND

Faith Meiser, a McKinley High School teacher who passed away in 2024, enjoyed cooking, gardening, traveling and escorting group travelers for Fidelity Tours until her retirement in 2009. Through her estate plans, Faith established a charitable fund to provide perpetual support to the Hartville Area Community Charitable Trust Fund at Stark Community Foundation, a fund designed to invest in capital improvements and special projects in the Hartville area.




John R. and Phyllis A. Milligan Memorial Fund
DESIGNATED FUND

John R. and Phyllis Milligan Charitable Fund identifies natural objects of benevolence including Young Life of Stark County, Christ Presbyterian Church and other local charities.

Plain Township Fire Department Charitable Fund
ORGANIZATION ENDOWMENT FUND

This endowment fund provides ongoing support to assist the Plain Township Fire Department in protecting the lives, property and environment within the Plain Township community through quality service and educational initiatives. The Plain Township Fire Department uses the annual distribution of funds to help the firefighters with projects, scholarships and community needs. A generous community member provided the seed money to establish this fund.

Refuge of Hope Endowment Fund
ORGANIZATION ENDOWMENT FUND

Established by Refuge of Hope in 2024, this endowment fund guarantees lasting support for Stark County residents facing homelessness, hunger or other effects of poverty. Income from the fund provides men, women and children with meals, shelter, clothing, healthcare and most importantly, HOPE for a better future.



Janey and Tony Snyder Charitable Fund
DESIGNATED FUND

Janey and Tony Snyder established a charitable fund to further their family's commitment to education and workforce development. With a shared belief in the power of education and healthcare, they recognize the vital role a well-trained and educated workforce plays in building stronger communities. Through their fund, they support a variety of nonprofits that offer opportunities for individuals to improve their lives and achieve their potential.

Stark County Medical Society Auxiliary Scholarship Fund
SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Stark County Medical Society Auxiliary created a scholarship fund to award annual scholarships to Stark County students pursuing careers in the healthcare industry.

Theodore M. II and Marilyn J. Stults Scholarship Fund
DESIGNATED FUND

This fund provides ongoing support to three scholarship funds at Walsh University.

Super Sabre Society Endowment Fund
FIELD OF INTEREST FUND

Established by the Super Sabre Society in 2024, this endowment fund aims to support the history of military aviation, specifically preserving the history of the F-100 Super Sabre and the courageous men who flew the aircraft.

Thank you to the following advisors— Ralph Dublikar from Baker, Dublikar, Beck, Wiley & Mathews, Jennifer Lile from Krugliak, Wilkins, Griffiths & Dougherty and Sara Studeny from Swallen, Lawhun & Co.— for referring their clients to achieve their charitable goals with a fund at Stark Community Foundation during the past two quarters.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

2024 NONPROFIT *Holiday Giving* GUIDE

If you would like to support your community this holiday season but aren't sure how, Stark Community Foundation can help. Our 2024 Nonprofit Holiday Giving Guide is a curated list of year-end needs of five local nonprofits serving our community.

To learn more and support these causes, visit starkcf.org/holiday-giving

MAKE SPORTS POSSIBLE FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Help **Adaptive Sports Ohio** give the gift of empowerment. A gift of **$250** sponsors one Stark County youth with a physical disability as they attend a three-day summer camp to connect with peers, participate in adaptive sports and build their self-confidence.

GIVE A FAMILY THE GIFT OF NATURE

This holiday season, **Beech Creek Botanical Garden & Nature Preserve** has a goal to gift 24 family memberships to underprivileged families in the Stark County area. A gift of **$125** will provide an annual membership to a deserving family.

BE THE REASON A CHILD SMILES

Ensure families can get their children to critical medical appointments. A donation of **$120** will allow **Embracing Futures** to provide three gifts of an electric toothbrush and a gas card or metro bus pass to help cover transportation costs for orthodontic treatments.

HELP HOMELESS VETERANS

Family & Community Services provides transitional housing for homeless veterans and families at its Honor Home. A gift of **$100** provides a hygiene basket for veterans, including hair products, slippers and robes, shower products, beard trimmers, hair clippers and more.

PROVIDE A HOLIDAY MEAL FOR SENIORS

For many of **Vantage Aging**'s clients, one meal represents their entire holiday celebration. A gift of **$100** will provide 10 holiday meals featuring ham, potatoes, broccoli and a festive dessert through its Meals on Wheels program.