Building Strong Communities through Collaboration

We all benefit from the strong nonprofits in our community. Several factors account for the success of our local nonprofits: passionate board members and volunteers, generous donors, active partners, long histories, strong relationships, and expert staff. We at the Cook Family Foundation are proud to do our part.

Through the Foundation’s Nonprofit Capacity Building Program, we see a strong staff as one of the keys to nonprofit success. Those people who serve as staff to a nonprofit have made a career choice motivated by mission. Often those working for nonprofits are paid less than those working for a government agency or a private business, and their benefits are not as broad.

Staff members working together, combined community fundraising, and coordinated programs to provide nonprofits with support are all good examples of effective collaboration.

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In recent years, the Cook Family Foundation has made grants to several nonprofits to add staff, but getting this right can be tricky. It’s important that new staffing be part of a comprehensive strategy to grow an organization, and revenues need to increase to support the expanded payroll. But the right staff person can jump-start a new program, create greater exposure for the work of a nonprofit, facilitate a beneficial partnership, and/or result in new donations or other revenues.

You too can support the staff of our local nonprofits, first by acknowledging and thanking them for their contributions to the community. If you serve on the board of a nonprofit, you already know how your positive engagement with your executive director benefits the mission of your organization. If you are a donor, your financial support of staff makes possible the good work of your favorite nonprofit. Grants are often available for programs, facilities, or supplies, but it’s hard to get those grants without a talented (i.e. well paid) executive director. Administrative staff helps everyone in a nonprofit be more successful. Your unrestricted contributions to a local nonprofit make possible the core staff that carry out the missions of our most committed community organizations.

Making a Difference in Our Community

Nineteen local community organizations came together in 2019 to raise funds, awareness and volunteers, some for the third #GivingTuesday in a row. The collaboration, working under the hashtag, #raiseUPshiawassee, was led this year by three organizations: Kimberly Renwick, Executive Director of the Shiawassee Community Foundation; Emily Marrah, Relationship Specialist of the United Way of Genesee – Serving Shiawassee County; and Yvette Collard, Associate Director of the Cook Family Foundation.
Through strategic, proactive use of funds and grants, the Cook Family Foundation strives to strengthen institutions, extend their mission and enable their growth. Our goal is to help initiate change and promote sustainability within an organization, and as such the Foundation is willing to provide financial support for programs, facilities, equipment, staffing, professional development, contracted services, or other tools for positive change. Each year the Cook Family Foundation reviews grant proposals from community organizations with emphasis on key areas as highlighted in this listing of projects funded in 2019.

### Community Organizations

- Nonprofit Capacity Building Program: $86,790
- Shiawassee Family YMCA: $45,000
- Memorial Healthcare: $30,000
- Lebowsky Center for Performing Arts: $17,000
- #raiseUPshiawassee (GivingTuesday): $6,240
- Shiawassee County Health Department: $5,000
- Emergency Shelter Needs in Shiawassee County: $3,000
- Capital Area Community Services: $1,300
- Shiawassee Arts Center: $1,000
- Downtown Owosso Farmers Market: $840
- Girls on the Run Mid-Michigan: $225
- Other Community Development Grants: $1,100

### Environment

- Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network (WIN): $22,000
- The Nature Conservancy: $4,000
- Other Environmental Support: $330

### University of Michigan

- Scholarships: $130,750
- Shiawassee Area Interns: $22,398
- Scholarship Support: $13,523

### Education and Youth

- Owosso Public Schools - Auditorium Enhancements: $500,000
- Hayo-Went-Ha Camps: $50,000
- Shiawassee Regional Education Services District - Shiawassee Scholars: $60,000
- Early Childhood Preschool Scholarships: $10,000
- Cub Scouts - Program Cost Assistance: $2,500
- Area Robotics: $750
- Youth Advisory Council: $500

### Additional Financials

- Administration & Associated Costs: $190,640
- Office Expenses and Memberships: $38,828
- Communications: $5,402
- Professional Services & Fees: $5,135

### Total Disbursements

$1,257,253

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**Grant Materials**

Go to [www.cookfamilyfoundation.org](http://www.cookfamilyfoundation.org) to find out more about:

- Scholarship Information
- Grant Criteria
- Grant Application
- Nonprofit Capacity Building Program

In the last five years, the Foundation has made grants totaling in excess of $3.3 million dollars in four primary areas.
Better Together

We can accomplish more when we work together. The Cook Family Foundation is committed to supporting collaboration in Shiawassee County. While our priority is to support our nonprofit partners, successful cooperation often requires the involvement of public agencies and/or the private sector. We are willing to support collaboration in at least three different ways:

1. **Information Sharing** between organizations and agencies can identify opportunities for collaboration. When organizations can communicate clearly about their aspirations and activities, then others can align with and support endeavors which are mutually beneficial. Such cooperative efforts can be part of an ongoing process or a one time meeting, and can occur either in person or virtually.

2. **Partnerships** and other joint efforts allow organizations to provide programs in the most efficient manner and target services where they can achieve the biggest impact at the least cost. The best partnerships draw on the strength of one organization to complement those of another.

3. **Collective Impact** and other structured forms of collaboration allow several organizations to come together to address common community problems which are often beyond the scope of any one organization and agency to solve. To be successful, collaboration requires intentional planning, a clear purpose with agreement on quantified goals, ongoing communication, and a formal structure to support coordination.

To learn more about collaboration, find links to research on Collective Impact, and download an application for grant funds to support cooperative activities, visit the Foundation’s website: www.cookfamilyfoundation.org.