

Giving Power

Fenton Community Fund

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LAFF Pathway Will Connect Local Communities

Six years ago, a group of community health advocates had an idea to establish non-motorized, paved trails in the southern Genesee County region. They started meeting, each came with their own expertise and interests—walkers, bikers and runners. After six years of talking, the group formed a broader committee now known as the LAFF (Linden-Argentine-Fenton-Fenton Township) Trails Coalition. The LAFF “district” coincides with the three southern school district areas of Linden, Lake Fenton and the Fenton School Systems.

Through many public hearings that began in 2009, and the gathering of public support, four routes were identified for placement of a 10-foot wide, multi-use paved trail. Top on the list is the 2-mile long Silver Lake Road corridor between the cities of Linden and Fenton.

To support trail development, the LAFF Pathway Fund was established on August 27 at the Community Foundation of Greater Flint. Gifts will support the group’s goals to raise funds for matching grants.

“You have to have grants to support trail development, and most grants require matching dollars,” said Victor Lukasavitz, Chair of the LAFF Trails Coalition. “Coalition members

started the Fund because we wanted to demonstrate that we have skin in the game. And we will continue to give to the Fund, and we hope others interested in the pathways’ project will do the same.”

Beyond matching funds and grant dollars, it’s important to have community cooperation and coordination with local planning commissions, park systems, the Michigan Department of Transportation and the Department of Natural Resources, says Lukasavitz. The retired engineer says the more local partnering, the better opportunity there is to receive grants. To date, the Coalition is very pleased with the support of all the local communities and the county agencies involved. Public support is important to the project’s success.

“The LAFF Pathway is not a pipe dream. It is going to happen,” says Lukasavitz. “We are within three to five years of seeing a trail on the ground. We want to develop something sustainable and progressive.”

The LAFF Trails Coalition meets monthly to continue the progress. For more information, join the LAFF Pathway Facebook page or visit the new website at laffpathways.com. Tax-deductible gifts can be made to the LAFF Pathway Fund online at cfigf.org.

About Us

Established in 1991, the Fenton Community Fund (FCF) is a permanently endowed Fund of the Community Foundation of Greater Flint. Grants from FCF support community projects and nonprofit organizations that exclusively benefit the Fenton, Lake Fenton and Linden communities and enhance the quality of life for its residents.

Endowed Funds associated with the Fenton Community Fund

- Franklin D. Adams Fund
- Richard A. Beardsley Memorial Fund
- James T. Botticelli Scholarship Fund
- William and Alberta Close Memorial Fund
- William and Alberta Close Endowment Fund for the Loose Senior Center
- Fenton Area Public Schools Education Foundation Fund
- Fenton High School Alumni Association Scholarship Fund
- Fenton Historical Society Endowment Fund
- Horace W. Hitchcock Memorial Fund
- Jason E. King “Thinking of Others First” Fund
- Lake Fenton Community Schools Foundation Fund
- Loose Senior Center Endowment Fund
- Florence Michelson Fund
- Popa Family Endowment Fund
- South Lakes Youth Initiative Program Fund
- Kim and Ginger Virkler Community Trails Fund
- Winegarden Family Endowment Fund



Members of the LAFF Trails Coalition include (front, from left) Autumn Perry-MacClaren, Lisa Wismer, Sue Shaw, Shannon Brant; (back, from left) Victor Lukasavitz, Patric Parker, Denny Dunfield, Gary McFarren and Jesse Anderson. Not pictured: Ann Walker and Noah Morgan.



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MICS #6718

For-Mar Truck Farm Coming to a Park Near You

Like other Flint-based philanthropists, Forbes and Martha Merkley left a precious gift to the community. In the 1960s, Forbes and Martha operated a dairy farm just outside the city limits of Flint. The gently rolling landscape included pastures, meadows, mature woodlots, wetlands and ponds. Eager to preserve their property, the couple donated 383 acres to Genesee County. In 1970, For-Mar Nature Preserve and Arboretum opened as a county park, named after Forbes and Martha.

Today the preserve features seven miles of trails, two nature centers, a picnic area, a new pavilion for gatherings, and gardens. Kearsley Creek meanders through this beautiful place, which has become a popular destination for school field trips.

When For-Mar staff noticed a decline in field trip opportunities for schools, they came up with an idea to take For-Mar programs "On the Road" to county parks and schools. Since 2004, these mobile programs have touched the lives of more than 57,000 Genesee County residents. The goal in 2016 is to reach 18,000 people through outreach efforts.

One of the newest "On the Road" features is the For-Mar Truck Farm. Built on a flatbed trailer, the

60-ft greenhouse features a variety of plants and vegetables, all grown from seed. The program is designed to get people outdoors, physically active, and learn about healthier eating habits, said Nicole Ferguson, For-Mar Park Naturalist.

"Truck Farm programs provide community access to healthy food through education on all aspects of gardening, harvesting and preparation," said Ferguson. "All food produced on the Truck Farm is given to program participants or harvested and donated to the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan."

The mobile garden and nature-based literacy programs will travel to Fenton, Fenton Township and Linden area parks and schools in 2016, thanks to a \$6,337.15 grant from the Fenton Community Fund, William and Alberta Close Memorial Fund, and the South Lakes Youth Initiative Program Fund.

"Our goal is through interaction with the Truck Farm, children and families will gain knowledge about gardening, growing and eating more nutritious food," Ferguson says. "The program is an educational bridge between youth, families and the natural world."



Pictured at the For-Mar Truck Farm (from left) Linda Hathaway, Bev McKenna, Sheila Petty, Kate Piper, Ron Stack and Ed Walterhouse.

We're Simply Over the Top!

In 2015, the Community Foundation of Greater Flint celebrated a major milestone—\$100 million in grants to the community! Members of the Fenton Community Fund Advisory Committee, as well as many donors and grantees, attended a special event in downtown Flint to celebrate. We're proud to report that the Fenton Community Fund and its associated funds have made grants totaling \$897,327. Thank you for helping us go "Over the Top!"

Apply for a Grant

Funding is available for charitable projects and programs that benefit Fenton and Linden area residents. Priority is given to grant proposals that address the following:

- Create recreational opportunities; outdoors and family friendly
- Provide opportunities for youth; structured and unstructured
- Support arts and culture; family friendly events/activities

Please contact Jennifer Farrington, program officer, at 810-767-3508 for more information.