

SAGINAW COMMUNITY FOUNDATION



cornerstone

AUTUMN 2025



Scholarship Spotlight

Aleya's path to radiology

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it takes
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OF US**
For good. For ever.

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President's Report

FROM RENEÉ S. JOHNSTON

Your Saginaw Community Foundation

Fall marks a season of change in Michigan. The trees transform, the air turns crisp, and even our clocks shift. Personally, it's my favorite season – but I know not everyone shares that sentiment, since winter is never far behind. Still, change is part of life here in the Great Lakes Bay Region, and when we look around Saginaw County, we see change happening everywhere. New restaurants are opening in Saginaw Township, Hemlock High School is expanding and Downtown Saginaw is buzzing with construction along Washington Avenue.

At the Saginaw Community Foundation, we experience change, too – new staff and board members, new policies, new grant opportunities. But what never changes is our commitment to serve the people of Saginaw County which remains constant, steady, and strong.

In this issue of *Cornerstone*, you'll find many reminders of that commitment. You'll read about new charitable funds and scholarships that make it easier for people to give back. You'll see highlights from our Annual Celebration, where we came together as a community to honor others and recognize community successes and achievements. And you'll learn that SCF has once again met the rigorous requirements for re-accreditation with National Standards for Community Foundations – a clear signal to our donors that we are dedicated to being the best stewards of their generosity.

Our vision is simple: we want SCF to be your partner of choice when it comes to making a charitable impact. If you'd like to explore ways to give, visit the Donor Resources section of our

website at saginawfoundation.org/resources, or call (989) 755-0545. I'd be honored to discuss how SCF can help you reach your charitable goals.

On page 3 of this newsletter, we welcome new board members – including two outstanding youth leaders from our FORCE Youth Advisory Council. At the same time, we bid farewell to Richard Watson IV, a former FORCE member himself, who brought energy and vision to our work before relocating out of the area. We are grateful for his service and wish him continued success.

Finally, I would be remiss not to honor the recent passing of Mrs. Sandra (Sandy) Donahue, a true pioneer in Saginaw's philanthropic community. Sandy followed Mr. Ted Braun as president of SCF 41 years ago and, alongside our first CEO, Lucy R. Allen, helped lay the foundation of this organization. Her leadership and spirit will long be remembered, and she will be deeply missed.

As autumn settles in, I hope you'll take advantage of the many opportunities to connect with SCF. Join us at an upcoming event, celebrate the progress in our community, and remember: your foundation is here – for each of us, for good, for ever.

Wishing you a wonderful fall,

Reneé S. Johnston
President & CEO

MLK Regional Scholarship

Applications for the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Regional Scholarship are now available. This scholarship is for Bay, Midland and Saginaw County high school seniors, regardless of ethnicity, who actively embrace Dr. King's dream of improving racial harmony and social justice.

Scholarships are \$1,000 and nonrenewable. The awards are scheduled to be presented at the annual Great Lakes Bay Regional Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration program to be held in Jan. 2026 at Saginaw Valley State University.

Applications must be completed online and are due by Oct. 31, 2025. Visit saginawfoundation.org for details.



SCF welcomes new board members

At our June Board meeting, Christiana Malacara, and youth representatives Elle Hayes and Lilyana Johnson were appointed to a Board position at Saginaw Community Foundation.

Christiana is the creator of the That's What She* Said! Radio show at WSGW and also the owner of Third Eye Marketing.



Christiana Malacara



Lilyana Johnson

Elle, a senior at Heritage High School and Lilyana, a junior at Swan Valley High School, are student representatives from SCF's FORCE Youth Advisory Council.

Welcome to the Board, Christiana, Elle and Lilyana!

Photo of Elle Hawes was not available at time of publication.

New funds established

Community Initiative/Special Project Access and Opportunity Grant Fund

A pass-through fund designed to support nonprofit projects promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, and justice in Saginaw County. The program is made possible through a \$20,000 grant from the Consumers Energy Foundation.

Donor Advised

Charles F. and Adeline L. Barth Fund

A donor advised fund that will carry on the legacy of the Barth Family Foundation upon its dissolution.

Trooper Joel Popp Memorial Fund

A donor advised fund created to honor the memory of Trooper Joel Popp.

Scholarship

JustJane Art Scholarship For Women

An endowed scholarship that will be award \$2,000, preferably to a woman, going into the arts.

Jennings-Wingard Family Scholarship

An endowed scholarship that will award \$1,000 to a Bridgeport High School graduating senior attending Delta College.

Ronald N. Reimold Memorial Scholarship Fund

That's What She* Said Scholarship

Benefiting a female student residing in Michigan pursuing entrepreneurship and/or broadcasting.

Interested in starting a fund?

The fund you establish with the Saginaw Community Foundation can be set up in your name, in the name of your family, or in honor of any person or organization you choose. You also may choose to give to an existing fund.

Your fund will be endowed at the Saginaw Community Foundation. Earnings gained through investments will be used to make grants that address needs in Saginaw County. If you prefer, grants can be made anonymously.

To get started, meet with your professional advisor or contact the Saginaw Community Foundation at (989) 755-0545 or visit saginawfoundation.org for more information.

NEW online donor portal

Update your contact info to gain access

Saginaw Community Foundation is excited to announce the launch of our new online Donor/Fund Representative Portal. In order to invite you to join our new portal, we are asking for updated contact information from all fund representatives. Scan the QR code below or visit saginawfoundation.org/portal to access an online form.

After SCF receives your updated contact information, we will send an invitation to donors/fund representatives via email. The email will contain a secure link to complete your registration. Once your registration is complete in the new portal, you will be able to:

- See the current balance of your fund
- View recent grants from your fund
- Generate and download a PDF fund statement
- View recent donations to your fund

We hope you will take advantage of the features and benefits our new Donor/Fund Representative Portal has to offer. If you have any questions, please contact Lori TenEyck, director of finance, at lori@saginawfoundation.org or (989) 755-0545.



Visit saginawfoundation.org/portal and update your contact information today!

Scholarship Spotlight

Scholarship assists Aleya's path to radiology

When Aleya Davis received the call letting her know she had been awarded the **Gene & Shirley Nuckolls Scholarship** from the Saginaw Community Foundation, she was on vacation – and the moment was unforgettable.

"I was so happy," she recalls. "I told my mom right away, and we went out for dinner to celebrate. The scholarship eased so much financial stress."

Aleya, a graduate of Heritage High School and the Saginaw Career Complex, is now in her final year at Delta College, studying radiology. Her passion for the field was sparked by her grandmother, who is a radiologist and one of Aleya's biggest role models.

"I've always wanted to help and inspire others the way she does for her patients every day."

Growing up in Saginaw shaped who she is today. "It's a tight-knit community – not too big, not too small. The support from Saginaw Community Foundation gives people hope, and that's something special."

Aleya found the scholarship while researching ways to reduce her student loan debt. "The application process was easy and personal," she says. "It really made a difference."

Her advice to other students:

"Don't let doubt stop you. Take the time to apply. Every dollar helps."

Saginaw Community Foundation has been helping local students achieve their educational dreams for over 38 years. Each year, more than 900 scholarship awards totaling over \$1.5 million are presented to high school seniors, current college students, and adult learners from Saginaw County, the Great Lakes Bay Region, the State of Michigan and even other parts of the United States.

Whether you're pursuing Career and Technical Education (CTE), a two-year associate's degree, or a four-year university program, there's likely a scholarship opportunity for you at SCF each year.

A single application is all it takes to potentially qualify for one or more of our 255 individual scholarship opportunities. Many of our scholarship funds produce multiple awards each year.

Mark your calendar: the **2026 scholarship application cycle opens November 1, 2025.**

Visit saginawfoundation.org to explore eligibility criteria, search available scholarships, and learn more about what to do before starting a scholarship application.

"I was so happy! I told my mom right away, and we went out for dinner to celebrate. The scholarship eased so much financial stress."

Aleya Davis
SCF Scholarship Recipient



Inspiring the Next Generation of Innovators

SCF awards \$40,000 grant to HELP CVI's Summer of Innovation

This past summer, Saginaw high school students had the chance to look at their futures from a whole new perspective – literally. Thanks to a \$40,000 Community Improvement Initiative grant awarded annually from the Saginaw Community Foundation, HELP Community Violence Intervention (HELP CVI) launched its 2025 Summer of Innovation: STEM & Innovation Days in July at the Delta College Downtown Saginaw Center.

The two-day camp provided 50–60 students – many from underrepresented and underserved neighborhoods – with hands-on experiences in today's most exciting technology fields. From flying drones and coding apps to designing video games, participants explored how creativity, innovation, and problem-solving can shape both their futures and their community.

STEM with Purpose

HELP CVI's approach went beyond career exploration. By combining immersive STEM education with community violence prevention, the Summer of Innovation connected technology to real-world impact. Students:

- Trained to earn a recreational drone pilot's license and learned how drones can be used in public safety
- Explored app and game design as tools for crime prevention and community building
- Heard from tech professionals and entrepreneurs during career panels and live demonstrations

For Executive Director Kareem Bowen, the mission of HELP CVI is rooted in addressing violence where it happens most. "For those of you who are not aware, community violence intervention is the understanding that the communities where violence exists or permeates most are the communities most equipped to deal with it," he said. "HELP CVI is a response to the gun violence that has happened in our community."



2025 SCF Board of Directors' Community Improvement Initiative \$40,000 grant recipient, HELP CVI.

Since its founding, HELP CVI has worked directly with youth.

"We have been able to successfully engage a number of young people who are or have been involved in violence," Bowen shared. "We target populations from the ages of 12 to about 22."

Why It Mattered

Technology was at the heart of the Summer of Innovation. Bowen noted how vital these tools are for engaging students: "We're going to engage our young people with technology – drones, coding, and programming – using it to help serve our communities. Drone technology, in particular, allows us to have a presence without being overbearing and still allow young people to be young people."

The program also encouraged participants to see their skills as pathways to careers.

"This allows us to empower them with an entrepreneurial spirit, to show them how they can create a viable business, give back continually, provide for their families, and elevate their willingness," Bowen said.

Above all, his motivation remains personal. "I'm passionate about this work because I'm passionate about our kids," Bowen added. "I believe everybody wants to have a community where they can feel safe, raise a family,

and enjoy the beautiful legacy that Saginaw provides for all of us. This project allowed us to create innovative ways to engage our young people."

The program was free to students and included meals, mentorship, and career connections with local employers. By combining cutting-edge STEM learning with a vision for safer neighborhoods, HELP CVI's Summer of Innovation helped create a pipeline of leaders ready to build brighter futures for themselves and for Saginaw and beyond.

"This project allowed us to create innovative ways to engage our young people and empower them with an entrepreneurial spirit."

Kareem Bowen
Executive Director
HELP CVI

Community Awards Presented

Saginaw Community Foundation presented four community awards at our 2025 Annual Celebration held at Saginaw Valley State University on Sept. 8.

Frank N. Andersen Spirit of Philanthropy Award

Al and Beth Thieme were named this year's recipients of the Frank N. Andersen Spirit of Philanthropy Award.

In 1994, the Frank N. Andersen Spirit of Philanthropy Award was created to honor Mr. Andersen. The award is presented annually to an individual or individuals who have a history of outstanding philanthropic leadership and have demonstrated their generosity of time, talent, and dollars. This award honors its recipient, who, like Mr. Andersen, is a philanthropist in the truest sense of the word – with a personal commitment to making a difference here in Saginaw County.

Upon learning they were the recipients of this award during the program, Beth Thieme remarked: "It was definitely a surprise."

"Al and I are very grateful to receive this award," said Beth. "We've always been passionate about the Saginaw community and the people in it. And what I've always said to our kids is that this is a community that is a powerhouse of networking. We support one another, we care for each other, and we lift each other up."

Mridha Foundation Teacher of the Year Award

Donna Schantz, a teacher from Hemlock Elementary School, received this year's Mridha Foundation Teacher of the Year Award.

"Thank you, Dr. Mridha, for this award and thank you to Mr. Synder for nominating me," said Donna Schantz. "I believe that teaching students is my calling. It's what I was meant to do. It's not a job to me. It's my life."

Founded in 2010 by Dr. Debasish Mridha, the Teacher of the Year Award was established to help teachers inspire students to reach beyond their potential. Teacher's receiving this award will be presented with a grant to be used for continuing education and professional development.

"Teachers are one of our community's greatest assets," said Dr. Mridha. "I believe in recognizing teachers who go the extra mile."

Saginaw Community Foundation Volunteer of the Year Award

Brian Keenan-Lechel was named the Saginaw Community Foundation Volunteer of the Year. Brian currently serves on the SCF Board of Directors and is a member of the Scholarship (chair), Distribution (co-chair), and Philanthropy Uncorked Fundraising Event Committees.

"I am incredibly grateful to receive this award," said Brian Keenan-Lechel. "One of the things I love best and most about Saginaw is it's the type of community that can give you everything you need if you want to get involved, if you have a silly idea or, a great community initiative, there's support here and there's opportunity here."

Established in 2024, this award is presented annually to someone who exhibits: a desire to better the community, a passion for SCF and being a strong advocate, creativity, dependability, eagerness to learn, collaboration, is selfless and humble, and possesses an energetic attitude.

Joseph W. Madison Youth Award

Lily Winslow, a recent graduate from Freeland High School, was awarded the 2025 Joseph W. Madison Youth Award at our Annual Celebration.

"It has been my motto throughout high school to live by the saying, if you have something to give, give it," said Lily Winslow. "Whether that's a moment of your time to help clean up lunch tables, pick up someone else's trash, tell someone that their hair looks beautiful today, or start a community service project if you have the time to give and the energy."

Established in 2007, the Joseph W. Madison Youth Award recognizes an area youth who has given a little more and went above and beyond to serve the community. A longtime community volunteer and champion, Joseph Madison spent countless hours giving back to help make Saginaw County a better place and remarked: "Everybody's got something to give. There are so many ways to take your skills and talents and help the community."

Lily was nominated by Ms. Amy Melton, counselor at Freeland High School.



2025 Frank N. Andersen Spirit of Philanthropy Award recipients, Al and Beth Thieme.



2025 Mridha Foundation Teacher of the Year recipient Donna Schantz (right) pictured with Dr. Debasish Mridha (left).



2025 Saginaw Community Foundation Volunteer of the Year recipient, Brian Keenan-Lechel.



2025 Joseph W. Madison Youth Award recipient Lily Winslow.

National recognition

SCF receives re-accreditation with National Standards for Community Foundations

Saginaw Community Foundation recently received re-accreditation with the National Standards for Community Foundations – the nation's highest standard for philanthropic excellence. Saginaw Community Foundation was first accredited in 2006 and has maintained its accreditation ever since.

"Meeting the National Standards benchmarks is a rigorous, comprehensive process," said Austin Dickson, president of the Community Foundations National Standards Board. "This accreditation is a significant accomplishment that indicates Saginaw Community Foundation demonstrates a commitment to transparency, quality, integrity and accountability as it carries out its mission."

The National Standards for Community Foundations program requires community foundations to document their policies for donor services, investments, grantmaking and administration. With over 500 community foundations accredited nationwide, the program is designed to provide quality assurance to donors, as well as to their legal and financial advisors.

This re-accreditation by the Community Foundations National Standards Board represents Saginaw Community Foundation's commitment to rigorous, sector-driven best practices that exceed federal and state requirements in demonstrating accountability and excellence to our community, policymakers, and the public. As community founda-



tions face regulation at the state and the federal level, the accreditation program provides an additional layer of rigorous and enforced accountability.

"This is critically important to our donors," said Reneé Johnston, Saginaw Community Foundation president and CEO. "When people make a charitable bequest or establish a fund, they are putting their trust in us. They are counting on us to manage the investment wisely and honor their charitable wishes. The National Standards accreditation says our house is in order."

Saginaw Community Foundation offers a range of charitable funds, allowing donors to advance a cause, support an individual organization, provide flexible support for community needs or recommend individual grants. In addition to affirming the organization's philanthropic services, the accreditation validates Saginaw Community Foundation's grantmaking practices for the nonprofit community.

"Grantmaking is a lot like investing," said Johnston. "We need to assess risks, weigh potential gains, diversify assets, monitor performance and operate fairly. With our National Standards accreditation, you can be assured that we're doing just that."

"When people make a charitable bequest or establish a fund, they are putting their trust in us. They are counting on us to manage the investment wisely and honor their charitable wishes. The National Standards accreditation says our house is in order."

Reneé S. Johnston
President & CEO, Saginaw Community Foundation

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There are various levels of public and printed recognition available depending upon your membership level. For more information, call (989) 755-0545.



Notable Dates

OCT
31

Martin Luther King, Jr. Regional
Scholarship applications due

OCT
31

Application deadline for general
Access and Opportunity Grant

NOV
01

SCF Scholarship Application
opens online

NOV
19

5th Annual Philanthropy Uncorked
beer, wine and bourbon fundraising
tasting event at Zehnder's of
Frankenmuth

DEC
01

Pillar Society reception –
SCF Boardroom

DEC
31

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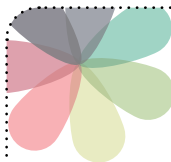
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