

History

Marion Community Foundation has been, since even before its inception, focused on caring for the community of Marion, Ohio. What is now known as Marion Community Foundation began in healthcare as the Ohio MedCenter Foundation.

Jumping back even further, we can trace our roots to 1957 when Dr. Frederick Smith and Dr. Philip Smith created the Mary Elizabeth Smith Foundation to honor their mother and support the Frederick C. Smith Clinic started by their father. The Smith Foundation was supported by donations from the Clinic's original 10 doctors, as well as several local businesses. Through funding from the Smith Foundation, Community Memorial Hospital was opened in 1962. In 1972, the hospital was renamed MedCenter Hospital and the Mary Elizabeth Smith Foundation became the Ohio MedCenter Foundation.

The Foundation owned the hospital and clinic buildings. It was the sale of these assets to OhioHealth in February 1998, which, along with a name change, became Marion Community Foundation. The creation of a community foundation was the intention of the former MedCenter board, including then-chair Robert M. Wopat, to continue charitable work in Marion.

Marion Community Foundation owes a debt of gratitude to the long-term vision of the Smith brothers, as well as Robert Wopat, who went on to leave his \$17 million estate to the Foundation in 2008—as well, of course, to all the donors who have helped Marion Community Foundation grow and positively impact the communities of Marion County.

Marion Community Foundation was officially reorganized in May 1998 and by September, Deborah Shade was on board as the Foundation's first full-time president and chief executive. The initial staff also included administrative assistant Nancy Weir.

Offices for the “new” foundation were established at 238 E. Center St., a 15-member board of trustees organized, and Marion Community Foundation's mission as the philanthropic clearinghouse for the Marion area was off and running. In short order—by December 1999—the Foundation established its first donor fund, announced its first cycle of community grants, and had a scholarship program taking shape. That year saw the establishment of the “C” Fund, the Foundation's the first unrestricted fund, and the Marion Area Auxiliary Scholarship Fund became the first scholarship fund. Two months later, Marion Community Foundation awarded its first academic scholarship to nursing student Brandi Mooney. By November, the Foundation's second grant cycle was announced and the Marion Family YMCA created the first organizational endowment fund. In 2000, Brad Bebout succeeded Shade as president and CEO.

Foundation Presidents Past & Present:



Deborah Shade
1998-2000



Brad Bebout
2000-2013



Dean L. Jacob
2014-Present

Appendix

An annual program of competitive grant awards was, by 2001, well established and growing. That year saw the addition of Diana Rinesmith as administrative assistant, as well as the establishment of eight new funds, including two additional scholarships. Rinesmith continues to present, serving as office manager.

In 2002, another eight funds were established at Marion Community Foundation, bringing assets to \$13 million, and adding the Jack V. & Violet M. Griffith Fund as the first designated fund. The Griffith Fund supports the Marion Homeless Shelter, Quality of Life Hospice, and Lutheran Social Services.

Marion Community Foundation's first website was launched in 2003. By 2011, when the scholarship portfolio had grown to nearly 50 funds, the Foundation launched an online scholarship application to keep pace with the hundreds of annual applications for the \$150,000 being awarded each year. In 2003, Marion Community Foundation reached the \$1 million mark in total grants and scholarships awarded.

In 2004, the Foundation had outgrown its offices and moved into the first floor of the historic Stengel-True Museum at 504 S. State St., where it currently resides. This was the first year of its annual Holiday Open House, an ever-popular event which has come to be recognized as the kickoff to the holiday season in the community.

Marion Community Foundation, by 2005, managed 48 funds. It was this year that began the review process which would culminate nearly our years later with the receipt of National Standards accreditation from the Council on Foundations. This designation placed Marion Community Foundation among the ranks of top community foundations in the country and verified that it met the highest standards of operational quality, integrity, and accountability.

The next two years saw the addition of 24 funds and \$2 million in assets - bringing the total assets to more than \$15 million. Marion Community Foundation passed the \$2 million mark in overall grant and scholarship awards. By 2008, Marion Community Foundation celebrated its 10th birthday and its firm establishment as the premier philanthropic organization for Marion residents to achieve their planned giving goals. Following on the heels of this milestone, late in 2008, Marion Community Foundation received a landmark gift which doubled the Foundation's size. Three funds were created by the late Robert & Dorothy Wopat, totaling \$17 million. The Wopat Funds substantially support numerous community organizations, causes, and scholars in perpetuity. The Judge Thomas K. Jenkins Scholarship Fund was established 2008 as the Foundation's first post-graduate scholarship, making annual awards for students pursuing careers in law.



Appendix

The legacy of A. Merle Hamilton, life-long Marion resident and noted philanthropist, became part of Marion Community Foundation in 2010 with the establishment of five new funds from his estate in support of several local organizations and causes.

Ohio-based firm Lancaster Pollard was hired in 2011 to serve the Foundation as Chief Investment Officer. As such, the firm assists and advises the Foundation's Board of Directors in maintaining and proactively developing investment and spending strategies and policies. In 2015, the Cleveland-based firm became known as Clearstead and continues its relationship with the Foundation.

In 2012, Marion Community Foundation's assets totaled \$38 million in more than 140 funds and the Wopat Scholarship became the largest fund in the annual Scholarship Program.

In 2013, the Foundation's assets reached a new milestone—\$40 million! The organization launched a web-based philanthropic management software system to provide online access to donors, grantees and scholarship applicants, as well as staff members, by providing complete transparency of operations.

On January 1, 2014, Dean Jacob became the third president and CEO of the Foundation. Next came Julie Prettyman, who, as Director of Programs oversees the scholarship program, grants program, affiliated organizations, and special events, all of which continue to grow at the Foundation. In 2015, Lori S. Stevenson joined the staff as Communications Manager after having served on a freelance basis since 2004.

In 2015, the Joe Slanser Fund was created by the Foundation's second largest gift from an individual—\$3.5 million. A designated fund, it supports Epworth United Methodist Church and the Marion Union Station. In 2017, Marion Community Foundation launched the MarionMade! community pride initiative to create a positive attitude among local residents, businesses, and visitors and promote the good people, places, products, and programs of Marion, Ohio; it is now coordinated by Marion Technical College.

By late 2019, the Foundation reached a new milestone - assets of \$50 million - and continued to grow, even during the coronavirus pandemic, to \$58 million by late 2020 in 375 charitable funds. Throughout most of 2020, and into 2021, Marion Community Foundation operated under pandemic protocols, with the majority of the staff working remotely and Board and committee meetings held via teleconference. The scholarship and grants programs continued on schedule, awarding \$430,000 and \$511,000 respectively in 2020. Two new grants programs were added to address specific community needs - the Teaching, Educating And Classroom Help (TEACH) Grants for local K-12 teachers and the Racial Equity & Justice Grant Program.

