George Adams and Michelle McHale-Adams
Giving Because They Care
George Adams and Michelle McHale-Adams are two of our One Hundred New Philanthropists.

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Married 65 years, Helen and Allen first met at her sister’s wedding in 1950. Both of them come from families who were generous and community minded. “I believe in the innate goodness of people,” said Helen. Growing up on Long Island, New York, she recalls her mother volunteering as a nurse’s aide at nearby Mitchell Field during World War II, where the wounded were flown directly from the European battlefields. “One day she brought home a young man who had been blinded in the war. He wanted to call his girlfriend to tell her about his condition, and my mother helped him make that difficult call. Years later, after our family moved to Michigan, the soldier and his wife, who wasn’t his wartime girlfriend, tracked her down. He wanted to thank my mother,” she said. That small act of kindness has remained with Helen all her life.

Allen’s family was always generous too. His father, David D. Hunting, was one of the founders of Steelcase, and the downtown YMCA bears his name. His grandmother, Grace Dyer Hunting, was instrumental in raising the construction funds for the YWCA, and his mother, Mary Ives Hunting, left a bequest to Grand Rapids Community Foundation for summer camps and camping. Like her son Allen, Mary Hunting loved the out-of-doors and valued that summer programs gave inner city kids access to the country or camp.

“I grew up on Lake Michigan. I spent all my summers here except when I was in the Navy, and, the longer I live, the more appreciation I have for the world around me,” Allen said. “I’m intrigued by the changes I’ve seen over time...erosion on the beach, the alewives dying off. I wonder where all the minnows and perch have gone. It’s our responsibility to protect the Great Lakes, and we should have a better understanding of them. As much as Helen and I have traveled, there’s never been anywhere in the world that we’d rather be, than right here. This is home.”

The Huntings’ philanthropy shows their deep respect for the environment, especially the Great Lakes watershed. They recently made some significant grants in spending down their non-endowed Donor Advised Fund. They are supporting the Robert B. Annis Water Resources Institute at Grand Valley State University—both with an outright gift and by creating The Allen I. and Helen J. Hunting Research and Innovation Fund there. The latter will provide an ongoing income stream for the organization. Further, they are making grants to the Grand River Restoration project and have designated the residuum of the fund to support the Mary I. and David D. Hunting Family Fund at the Community Foundation, which provides grants to camps and camping experiences for low-income kids. They also created the Allen I. and Helen J. Hunting Unrestricted Fund.

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– Allen Hunting

“Working with Allen and Helen for the past thirty years has been delightful. It’s been great to help them design and carry out their philanthropy and see all the good that comes from their generosity,” said Diana Sieger, Community Foundation president.

Giving with an Eye on the Great Lakes

Helen and Allen Hunting have been generous donors to a community they love, particularly when it comes to their passion for the Great Lakes.
It was a lucky thing for Grand Rapids when Louise Johnson chose to move here after high school, sometime around 1939. She came to Grand Rapids from Jacksonville, Florida, and enrolled at Grand Rapids Community College. Passionate about teaching, she went on to earn a bachelor’s degree in elementary education from Western Michigan University and a master’s degree in reading and social studies from Michigan State University. She taught in Grand Rapids Public Schools for over 26 years before retiring.

A donor to the African American Heritage Fund, Louise passed away on May 22, 2017. She will forever hold the distinction of making the first planned gift to that fund. Her trustees, Nadine and Sharon, carried out her bequest with help from Pam Cross, estate planning attorney at Rhoades McKee.

Louise was a civil rights activist. While serving on the Grand Rapids NAACP executive board, she recruited 1,000 members to the chapter and chaperoned the NAACP youth group to the 1963 March on Washington. She participated in protests against slumlords in the City of Grand Rapids, which resulted in fines, punishment and changes in maintenance laws for rental properties. She served as an Urban League member, United Methodist Community House trustee and Board of Inspectors of Election chair.

For over 18 years, Louise was a member of the Messiah Missionary Baptist Church, active in the Mothers Board, Missionary Ministry, Baraca Philathea and Deaconess Ministry. Prior to attending Messiah, she was a member of Nehemiah Church, Faith Missionary Baptist Church and Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church.

She and her husband, Booker T. Johnson, were the proud parents of Medwin Lloyd Johnson, who died in 1993. Louise established a memorial scholarship in his name and gave over $25,000 in GRCC scholarships through the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women Club.

To learn more about Metz Legacy Society, please contact Marilyn or Jenine at 616.454.1751.
THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES AT GRAND RAPIDS COMMUNITY FOUNDATION RECENTLY APPROVED SIX GRANTS TOTALING $746,000.

**Comprenew:**
*Purpose:* To support Comprenew Connect, computer literacy classes to bridge the digital divide among low-income populations. Successful graduates of the class will qualify for significant discounts or scholarships to purchase a refurbished computer.

**Why it matters:** Computer literacy enhances academic performance for children and increases employment opportunities for adults. Grand Rapids Public Schools conducted a survey in 2016, which revealed that 25 percent of families in its system did not own a home computer and the parents do not possess computer skills. Comprenew Connect will help improve academic performance for children from low-income households. The classes will also help improve the adults’ technology skills, making them eligible for higher paying jobs and potentially enhancing quality of life for themselves and their families.

**Family Outreach Center:**
*Purpose:* To support Family Outreach Center’s behavioral health project to provide culturally responsive mental and behavioral health services to uninsured or underinsured children and adults.

**Why it matters:** Demand for mental health services continues to rise because of elevated anxiety in marginalized communities, along with reduced stigma for those seeking support. Family Outreach Center has a culturally diverse staff and offers services in English and Spanish. Their approach to service often includes providing support to entire families. Support from the Community Foundation will be matched with Medicaid outreach dollars, therefore multiplying the local impact on low-income residents seeking mental health services.

**First Steps Kent:**
*Purpose:* To support restructuring efforts for First Steps Kent to transition from a program delivery organization to a coordinating body. It will become Kent County’s early childhood collective impact backbone organization.

**Why it matters:** Roughly 80 percent of a child’s brain is developed in the first three years of life. Everything during that time, from nutrition to environment and socialization, affects a child’s ability to be ready for kindergarten. First Steps Kent aims to improve services, support and systems in Kent County that influence a child’s readiness for kindergarten. Readiness often indicates how well a child will do in ensuing school years. They are building an infrastructure to work with early childhood partners, parents and stakeholders to ensure that prenatal and early childhood services are high quality, aligned and accessible to all.

**Home Repair Services:**
*Purpose:* To support the Home Repair Services’ Home Maintenance Checkup program. The program helps Kent County homeowners identify and prioritize home maintenance and repair items, and it connects them with resources that promote safe and stable housing.

**Why it matters:** When critical home problems go unrepaired, they can cause serious health and safety hazards to homeowners, especially those who are financially, physically and cognitively vulnerable. Kent County’s current affordable housing crisis magnifies the hazard. The Home Maintenance Checkup program offers the unique opportunity for a free, one-on-one, in-home session with a professional builder. Owner occupants will receive a comprehensive home inspection and detailed summary of the home’s short-term and long-term maintenance and repair needs.

**Local First Educational Foundation:**
*Purpose:* For the “Good for Grand Rapids” campaign. The grant aims to increase the number of businesses that positively impact the community. It will help locally-owned companies create living wage jobs and equitable employment practices.

**Why it matters:** This project addresses Grand Rapids Community Foundation priorities to create an inclusive economy through entrepreneurship, access to good jobs and racial equity. It includes improved diversity and inclusion in local businesses, minority procurement policies and working with neighborhood businesses to hire residents. Particular emphasis will be placed on neighborhood and minority-owned businesses.

**NIA Centre:**
*Purpose:* To support NIA Centre’s My Story program. NIA is an emerging nonprofit that aims to be “the heart of West Michigan’s African American community, where all are welcome to share, teach, learn, and celebrate our collective culture.” My Story is a series of art and cultural exhibits, performances and discussions featuring speakers such as local artist Paul Collins.

**Why it matters:** While Grand Rapids is one of the nation’s fastest growing and thriving metropolitan areas, unfortunately not all segments of the community are sharing in the prosperity. Through My Story, community thought leaders will frame relevant issues, share stories of those affected by inequity and explore solutions as a community. These critical conversations will bring together entire ecosystems that inspire, build, transform and connect the African American community to the community as a whole.
For many Challenge Scholars students, preparing for the 2017-18 academic year began long before school resumed in late August. This summer, 56 Challenge Scholars got a head start during Kick-Off Camp, held June 26-29 at the YMCA’s Camp Manitou-Lin in Middleville. Attending the annual four-day camp is free (and strongly encouraged) for any 6th, 7th or 8th grader attending Harrison Park and Westwood Middle.

**WHY KICK-OFF CAMP?**

It’s fun.

Zipline, archery, extreme sports, swimming, canoes, kayaks, high ropes, rock climbing, horseback riding, group games—the list goes on of fun options the students can try, many for the first time.
It’s like college.

It’s a new place, away from home, with new people to meet and new friends to make. There are different rules, food and living quarters. Students learn to be independent and grow, while learning a lot about themselves and new things, like nature and rock climbing.

It builds community.

Students get to make new connections with other Challenge Scholars, potentially from another school. They get encouragement from counselors who ensure them they have what it takes to go to college. They do team-building activities and practice positive reinforcement with their peers.

While Kick-Off Camp focuses on Challenge Scholars, it’s definitely a family affair. Families come out the first evening of camp and have dinner, learn a little about what goes on at camp and try different activities. This is a great time to build community and trust around Challenge Scholars, while also having fun and making memories.
George Adams and Michelle McHale-Adams moved to Grand Rapids in 2001, when George was hired by Universal Traffic Service. He is now a senior vice president, overseeing clients’ logistical needs. Michelle is a partner at Plante Moran and leads the firm’s forensic investigative practice. She and her team help solve the puzzles of financial crimes for victims of fraud. On weekends, Michelle and George enjoy dining at Grand Rapids restaurants, shopping at the Downtown Market and spending time with their two rescued dogs, Lucy and Hank.

When they moved here, Grand Rapids was just beginning a momentum of revitalization. “It has been important to us to help support those endeavors that will keep Grand Rapids thriving, continuing to be the great city that it is,” George said.

George and Michelle like to give to local organizations since many have small budgets but much passion for their cause. They like to see, firsthand, how those donated dollars are used. Other community organizations they support include Artists Creating Together, Kids’ Food Basket, Mel Trotter Ministries and Humane Society of West Michigan, among others.

WHY DO YOU GIVE?
George and Michelle give because they care. “Given our careers, we have limited opportunity to donate our time. So, at the very least, we can donate funds so that others can continue community initiatives,” Michelle said.

WHY DO YOU SUPPORT GRAND RAPIDS COMMUNITY FOUNDATION?
It became important for George and Michelle to help support a community they have grown to love. “As we learned more about the Community Foundation’s areas of focus and grant processing, we knew that this organization has a better way of determining the needs of the community than we ever could,” George said.

“Of course, I asked many, many forensic-like questions and took a tour of the facility,” said Michelle. “I walked away with the confidence that the Community Foundation has sound business practices in place. That’s important for me, since I investigate fraud on a daily basis.”

As Grand Rapids Community Foundation moves toward its 100th anniversary in 2022, we want to recognize people’s philanthropy. That’s why we created our One Hundred New Philanthropists campaign. This outreach effort asks people to do just four simple things:

- Make an annual gift to the Community Foundation.
- Volunteer in the community.
- Make a provision in your estate plan for the Community Foundation.
- Share your philanthropic story with others.

Thanks to George and Michelle for sharing their stories here. If you are interested in becoming part of One Hundred New Philanthropists, please contact Jenine Torres at 616.454.1751 or email her at jtorres@grfoundation.org.
We are so pleased to welcome Ashley René Lee as our new vice president of public relations & marketing. She will serve on the management team, help determine Grand Rapids Community Foundation’s strategic direction, and carry out growth and impact strategies through communication research, planning and tactics.

Ashley comes to the Community Foundation from Michigan State University, where she was assistant director of communications for Residence Education and Housing Services. Prior to that, she led communications strategies at the national headquarters of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority in Washington, D.C. Ashley has also worked as a communications consultant for many nonprofit organizations and as a freelance writer for several publications, including Essence Magazine and The Grand Rapids Press.

“Ashley brings a wide range of expertise to the Community Foundation. Her fresh perspective, diverse experiences and passion to see this community thrive make her a great addition to our team,” said Diana Sieger, Community Foundation president.

Ashley received a bachelor’s degree in journalism from Grand Valley State University and earned a master’s degree in public relations and corporate communications from Georgetown University. She was recognized by Who’s Who in Black Washington, D.C. as a Woman of Excellence Under 40 and was a finalist for the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce: 10 Over the Next Ten Award.

“I was raised, educated and mentored as a young professional in the Grand Rapids community. I am excited to be back and to put my skills to work in a city that I love and that has always been home. I want to help foster connections and play a role in building and sustaining an inclusive economy and thriving community,” Ashley said.

Ashley began her job on August 7 and fills a role held by Roberta F. King, who was with us for 13 years!
Grand Rapids Community Foundation Trustees approved $1.2 million in scholarships this year. The awards for high school seniors, college students and graduate students went to 677 people. A majority of students (75 percent) will attend college in Michigan—and 21 percent of the scholarships went to current or former graduates of Grand Rapids Public Schools.

“It’s notable that 51 percent of the students who received scholarships are the first in their family to attend college. That’s up four percent from last year—and is something we want to continue to grow,” said Ruth Bishop, Community Foundation education program officer. Each year, Ruth convenes 18 diverse committees of 93 community members who review applications, transcripts and essays and recommend scholarships. “Without our volunteers, we wouldn’t be able to review and give careful attention to each application. This is a time intensive activity,” she said.

Besides the joy of awarding scholarships, we treasure the interesting notes that students send to thank us and the fund founders.

“I have been chosen to be a recipient of your Rosemary Cook Education Scholarship for the 2017-18 academic year. I am honored to receive this scholarship and grateful for the opportunities it will provide me. I am currently finishing up my bachelor’s degree in English and education. Once I am ready, I hope to become an inspiring teacher for the Latino community. With this scholarship, I can be at ease, knowing your gift will greatly reduce my financial stress. Once again, thank you for your generosity and willingness to provide to those in need. Here’s to changing lives!”

Thalia Vega
Rosemary Cook Education Scholarship recipient

“I saw the envelope that read Scholarship Results Enclosed, and I was extremely excited. I figured I had won $200 or $300 at most. Then, when I read the award letter and it said $3,000, I was so shocked. This money will help me pay for my college. I come from a struggling family. My single mother really wants to help me financially, but can’t, so this money is very appreciated.”

Frankie Arguelles
Darooge Family Scholarship recipient

“I have been chosen to be a recipient of your Rosemary Cook Education Scholarship for the 2017-18 academic year. I am honored to receive this scholarship and grateful for the opportunities it will provide me. I am currently finishing up my bachelor’s degree in English and education. Once I am ready, I hope to become an inspiring teacher for the Latino community. With this scholarship, I can be at ease, knowing your gift will greatly reduce my financial stress. Once again, thank you for your generosity and willingness to provide to those in need. Here’s to changing lives!”

Thalia Vega
Rosemary Cook Education Scholarship recipient

“I want to just take the opportunity to say thank you for your support. I just recently graduated from the Radiologic Technology program at Grand Rapids Community College, and, as soon as I pass my boards, I’ll be licensed. I was one of five students accepted into GRCC’s MRI program. It was a difficult application process, but I landed a spot. I’ve started classes already and the scholarship is going toward program tuition. You have no idea how much this scholarship fund has meant to me. Without your help, I would have never been able to afford my tuition for the X-ray and MRI programs. This will probably be my last time receiving a Community Foundation scholarship, as I am now where I want to be in life. Thank you for believing in me.”

Gabriel Orduna
Thomas D. Coffield Scholarship recipient

“Honestly, school was not easy for me. During the four years of high school, three of my grandparents and one of my uncles died unexpectedly. Their deaths each impacted me seriously, and my grades in my freshman and sophomore years suffered. Along the way, there were teachers and support staff who pushed me to hang on and not give up. They encouraged me to graduate and dream big—for my grandparents—who were watching over me. In my senior year, I was able to pull my grades up and was accepted at Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio. My goal is to major in education. I want students, especially African American males, to understand that education is a necessity and is possible.”

Charlie Lee Lovelady III
Black Men Building Resources Scholarship Fund recipient

“I’m a healthcare business administration major and a single mother who works full time. I am currently looking at my position being eliminated, so the scholarship is appreciated more than you know. I absolutely plan to continue my education so I never face job loss again. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to continue my education and provide a bright future for my daughter, and so that I may show her to let nothing stop her on her path to success.”

Lindsey Helmer
Altrusa Scholarship recipient

**Congratulations Scholars**
STARTING AT HOME

I was saddened by the passing of the Honorable Vernon Ehlers on August 15, 2017. I appreciated Vern and other key political leaders who demonstrated civility and respect for others. Just to be clear, this is not intended to be a controversial commentary. Rather, it is my signal to our community that it is time to return to honoring and really listening to varied opinions.

Tomas Spath and Cassandra Danke, who founded a nonpartisan nonprofit, The Institute for Civility in Government, say, “Civility is about more than just politeness, although politeness is a necessary first step. It is about disagreeing without disrespect, seeking common ground as a starting point for dialogue about differences, listening past one’s preconceptions, and teaching others to do the same. Civility is the hard work of staying present even with those with whom we have deep-rooted and fierce disagreements. It is political in the sense that it is a necessary prerequisite for civic action. But it is political, too, in the sense that it is about negotiating interpersonal power such that everyone’s voice is heard, and nobody’s is ignored. And civility begins with us.”

In West Michigan, we have so many opportunities to shine the light on opportunity for all. We must choose not to let that light dim due to rancorous clashes of opinions and, sometimes, pure hatred. We do have problems, issues and different perspectives, but I would like to think we have the common goal of assuring that everyone in our community has the chance to prosper.

This starts with acknowledging that disparities based on race, gender, class, age, religion, sexual orientation, ability and immigration status do exist, and then taking the necessary steps to eliminate them.

We can’t let ourselves be held back by the divisiveness plaguing our country! Let’s start right here at home. Let’s listen for understanding and not just to make a point to determine who wins and who loses. Let’s lean into uncomfortable conversations with those who hold different opinions and beliefs than our own. Let’s be agents of change and work together to prove that the people of West Michigan have the grit, compassion and foresight to recognize the power of bringing together the diverse perspectives and lived experiences of our community to rise above the status quo.

We introduced our North Star in the summer edition of Current and it bears repeating: For West Michigan to grow and prosper, we must make sure that everyone can apply their talents and creativity to fuel our future. It is only by connecting across perspectives and overcoming inequities that we can build and sustain an inclusive economy and thriving community.

What this means is that Grand Rapids Community Foundation will continue to build trust and partnerships, support innovative approaches that challenge the status quo and advocate for systemic change. We support equitable outcomes in our community through actions, voices and investments. We listen to all community voices, ensuring that multiple perspectives are represented. And we are definitely committed to growing philanthropic assets with our donors so we can follow these principles.

We are doing this with great respect for all. We truly want to listen and hear what you are saying.
Diana Sieger Honored by Senior Neighbors

Diana Sieger, president of Grand Rapids Community Foundation, will be recognized by Senior Neighbors with the Twilight Shining Star Award for her service to the greater Grand Rapids community.

Senior Neighbors is a nonprofit agency focused on enhancing the lives of seniors. It serves more than 4,000 seniors age 60 or older in Kent County. Services include transportation, prescription assistance, home repair and assistance, group meals, case management assistance and volunteer opportunities. Senior Neighbors also operates five Senior Centers throughout Kent County.

Diana’s connection to Senior Neighbors goes back to her time at United Way and continues today through the Community Foundation’s Challenge Scholars program. Senior Neighbors places senior volunteers in Harrison Park, Sibley and Stocking school classrooms to tutor young children and empower them to reach their educational goals.

Diana has spent her career building and strengthening our community to benefit everyone who calls West Michigan home. She will be honored at Senior Neighbors’ 10th annual dinner and fundraiser, Twilight Shines, on November 15, 2017, at Watermark Country Club. For more information, visit seniorneighbors.org.