

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF KANKAKEE RIVER VALLEY

ANNUAL REPORT

2024

FAST FACTS
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TRACK TO TRIUMPH

Vipers Track Club receives a Robert K. Dunn Perpetual Charitable Trust Fund Grant to provide scholarships for underserved youth in our community. Page 11

PLUS!

Over \$96,000 in scholarship awards this past year
Page 15



VISION

Through leadership, stewardship, and grants, Community Foundation of Kankakee River Valley enhances quality of life throughout Kankakee and Iroquois Counties.

MISSION

Connecting people who care with causes that matter in our community.

We fulfill our mission by

- Building and preserving the funds of many individuals and institutions
- Awarding grants to nonprofit organizations that serve members who reside in Kankakee and Iroquois Counties.
- Creating and supporting vital and caring communities through philanthropy.

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From the Coaches Desk

Nicole Smolkovich
Executive Director

2024 was a big year—and we showed up ready to play.

Thanks to you—our donors, community sponsors, board and committee members—we were able to keep advancing our mission and strengthening our impact across Kankakee and Iroquois Counties. Your continued support powers everything we do, and we're grateful to have you on our team.

We're excited to share that our investments performed well this year, helping us grow our endowment funds and ensuring more long-term support for the nonprofits and organizations

working to improve quality of life in our region. Every dollar you give fuels programs, services, and ideas that make our communities healthier, happier, and more vibrant.

As you flip through this year's Annual Report, you'll notice a fun twist. Our theme, Game Time, reflects the energy and momentum we're feeling as a Foundation. The cover might look like a Sports Illustrated feature, but the real MVPs are all of you—our partners in this important work.

Thank you for staying in the game with us. We look forward to another year of impact, growth, and community wins.

With appreciation,

Nicole Smolkovich
Executive Director



Mia Hansen
Programs & Communications



Theresa Kolasinski
Accounting Assistant

59
Funds



New Funds in 2024

Kankakee Riverfront Society Pass Through Fund
Manteno High School Scholarship Fund
Renville Cares Fund
Tony & Rose Panozzo Family Fund
Watseka Community Renewal Fund

\$11.2 Million
Assets Under Management



\$96,107
Scholarships Awarded



6.7%
5-Year Return
on Investments



\$237,150
Grants Distributed



50
Organizations
Supported



CFKRV 2024-2025 Roster

Player	Position	Year
Nick Bufford, <i>Chair Elect</i>	Board/Executive	2026
Hollice Clark	Grants	-
Adam Elroy	Investment	-
Beverly Hood, <i>Treasurer</i>	Board/Executive	2027
Michael Pueschell, <i>Secretary</i>	Board/Executive	2028
Alice Argyelan	Board/Grants/Marketing	2028
Arlene Bartolini	Board/Grants	2025, Final
Nina Epstein	Board	2027
Dennis Hess	Investment	-
Walter Hasselbring III	Board/Investment	2025, Final
Jimmy Joines	Investment	-
Elizabeth Kubal	Investment	-
Michelle Langlois	Marketing	-
Rende Langlois	Board	2028
Jake Lee, <i>Board Chair</i>	Board/Executive	2026
Marsha Lloyd	Board	2027
Angela Morrey	Board/Marketing	2028
Kerstin Rust	Board	2025, Final
Karin Sailor	Grants	-
Cherie Smolkovich	Marketing	-
Braden Wepprecht	Board	2027
Jeff Williamson	Board/Grants	2025, Final

PHILANTHROPY PHIL IS A TEAM PLAYER

At the heart of every thriving community are individuals who care deeply and give generously. At the Community Foundation of Kankakee River Valley, we believe that everyone has the potential to be a philanthropist. Philanthropy isn't about the size of the gift; it's about the impact. Whether it's a one-time donation, monthly giving, or including the Foundation in your estate plan, every contribution makes a difference. With us as your giving partner, you can support a specific fund or cause that speaks to your passions, create a fund or scholarship to leave a lasting legacy and plan your giving in a way that aligns with your values and goals. Our foundation serves as a trusted vehicle to help you give in the way that is most meaningful and impactful to you. Together, we can uplift causes that matter, build opportunities for future generations, and strengthen our community in countless ways. Join us in making a difference—because we all can make an impact in our communities, we can all be like Phil!

Have you spotted Phil out and about in our community?



At the Community Foundation of Kankakee River Valley, we share Phil's vision. This year, thanks to donors like you, we've been able to serve our community in transformative ways. Members of the Legacy Society are dedicated to enriching Kankakee and Iroquois Counties by pledging \$5,000 or more over a five-year period to the Community Foundation of Kankakee River Valley. They also introduce friends and colleagues to CFKRV, its mission, and its programs. Traditionally, each year Legacy Society members are invited to attend an exclusive Legacy Society event, honoring our donors and celebrating the year. This past year Legacy Society members celebrated with Phil at the Lush Vine, sharing their legacy stories.



This year, donations made an impact in memory and honor of the following:

In Memory of Cynthia K. Wells-Dee, Donna J Seggebruch, Janice Strasma, Ken Allers, Myrna Paulissen, Patricia Schatz, Rebecca Schatz, Reverend William H. Copeland Jr., William Schatz

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In Honor of Chasity Wells-Armstrong



Statement of Financial Position

ASSETS	2024	2023
Current Assets:		
Cash and Certificates of Deposit	326,305	277,984
Investments	10,613,227	9,752,981
Total Current Assets	\$ 10,939,532	\$ 10,030,965
FIXED ASSETS		
Furniture and Equipment	19,926	19,926
Less: Accumulated Depreciation	(19,926)	(19,926)
Net Fixed Assets	-	-
OTHER ASSETS		
Property	278,047	278,047
Total Assets	\$ 11,219,579	\$ 10,309,012
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
Current Liabilities		
Accounts Payable/Accrued Liabilities	47,084	8,559
Total Current Liabilities	\$ 47,084	\$ 8,559
NET ASSETS		
Temporarily Restricted Funds	4,251,910	3,325,743
Permanently Restricted Funds	6,918,585	6,974,710
Total Net Assets	11,170,495	10,300,453
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 11,217,579	\$ 10,309,012

Statement of Revenue and Expense

REVENUE AND SUPPORT	2024	2023
Contributions	312,264	155,648
Grants	326,100	445,000
Investment Income	324,203	135,283
Gain (Loss) on Sale of Investments	600,658	(108,353)
Unrealized Gain on Investments	324,719	525,422
Administrative Fees Collected	84,235	53,235
Total Revenue and Support	\$ 1,974,203	\$ 1,206,235
EXPENSES		
Operating Expenses	766,570	760,159
Charitable Disbursements (Grants)	333,257	280,334
	\$ 1,099,827	\$ 1,040,493
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	917,126	1,032,162
Net Assets- Beginning of Year	10,300,453	9,268,291
Net Assets- End of Year	\$ 11,217,579	\$ 10,300,453

Full Audited Financial Statements available in the Foundation Office



Teaming up for impact

Community Foundation of Kankakee River Valley and United Way of Kankakee and Iroquois Counties continued their joint investment in early childhood success through the Success by 6 initiative. This collaborative effort, guided by a coalition and steering committee of early childhood providers, works to ensure that children in our community are healthy, supported, and ready to learn by age six. The coalition meets bimonthly, fostering communication and shared strategies across agencies to better serve families in Kankakee and Iroquois counties. They carry out their mission through three action teams, Early Childhood workforce development, Healthy Beginnings, and Supported Families.

The workforce development action team worked to bring the Trauma and Resilience Summit, a free, full-day training event that brought together over 150 local service providers. This event featured 14 breakout sessions focused on trauma intervention, resilience building, and burnout prevention. The Healthy Beginnings Family Support Bus continued to serve as a mobile outreach tool in partnership with the initiative. Throughout the year, the bus offered pop-up ASQ developmental screenings and on-site resource connections at community events. Over 100 children were screened, and more than 200 children's books were distributed, helping caregivers better understand their child's development and encouraging early literacy.

The supported families team hosted its fourth annual Early Childhood Fair at the Kankakee Farmers Market, an event designed to connect families with vital early childhood services in a welcoming, family-friendly environment. More than 150 children participated, engaging in hands-on activities and receiving resources from 19 different early childhood service providers. The fair continues to grow each year, serving as a key point of access for families seeking support.

1,942
service connections
471
referrals
200+
books distributed
100+
ASQ Screenings



A significant milestone in 2024 was the addition of Tammy Marcotte to the team in the role of Community Navigator. Tammy works closely with the Kankakee County Health Department to identify and connect families to services ranging from healthcare and education to housing and mental health support. Through her efforts, 1,942 service connections were logged, including 471 formal referrals to community-based services. Her role has become an essential bridge between families in need and the resources available to help them thrive. Together, these efforts reflect the power of collaboration and shared purpose. The partnership between the Community Foundation and United Way, alongside the dedication of countless providers and partners, is transforming how families in our region access early childhood support. Through Success by 6, the community is investing in its youngest members—and the results are already making a lasting difference.



There is no I in TEAM

The Community Foundation also proudly partners with United Way to inspire and educate the next generation of board members through Board Bootcamp. This program equips individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to serve on nonprofit boards in our communities. Over the past year, two successful cohorts were completed in Kankakee County, empowering participants to step confidently into leadership roles.



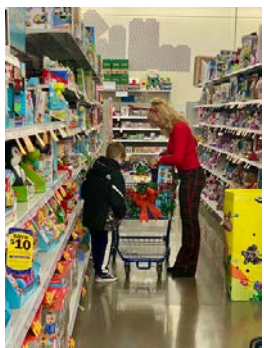
Collaboration is vital to impacting change in our communities. That is why the Community Foundation of Kankakee River Valley, in partnership with the Kankakee Chamber of Commerce, hosts quarterly Nonprofit CEO Coffee Talks. These gatherings provide a welcoming space for nonprofit leaders to connect, share insights, and support one another in their mission to serve the community. As we look ahead to 2025, we're excited as these expand into Iroquois County, fostering collaboration and strengthening bonds across even more organizations.

Game Changing Support

Fiscal sponsorships provide a powerful way to foster new opportunities for organizations and initiatives that may not have the resources or infrastructure to operate independently. By partnering with established organizations, like the Community Foundation of Kankakee River Valley, these groups gain access to vital financial management, fundraising support, and operational guidance. This allows them to focus on their mission while ensuring transparency and accountability. Fiscal sponsorships empower new projects to grow, build community impact, and create lasting change, all while providing a streamlined path to success.

Kankakee County CEO launched in the fall of 2023 with the backing of local business partners and area schools, the Kankakee County CEO Program has already proven to be a transformative experience for students. This innovative program is more than a business course—it provides hands-on, experiential learning that equips participants with essential workforce skills, including problem-solving, teamwork, self-motivation, responsibility, communication, and professionalism. Now in its second year, the program is thriving with five students from Kankakee High School under the guidance of facilitator Katie Bretzloff. Supported by 48 active investors, these students completed two microbusiness ventures and launched Kankakee Curated in December. Within the first months of class, they visited 14 local businesses and heard from 26 guest speakers, providing invaluable insights into the business world as they prepare for their individual business. Last Spring, the inaugural class set the bar high, with one student earning top honors at the CEO National Pitch Competition. Building on that success, the current class is embracing opportunities to develop critical thinking, time management, and real-world connections.

Kankakee County CEO



Renville Cares, an initiative started by the Renville family, is all about giving back to the local community. Through their beloved Annual Fall Fest and Turkeys for Tots fundraisers, they bring joy and hope to over 400 children each year, making it possible to experience the magic of the holiday season. This past year, Renville Cares partnered with the Community

Foundation of Kankakee River Valley as their fiscal sponsor. With CFKRV's support, Renville Cares can focus even more on what they do best—lifting up families and spreading kindness. Together, we're making a year-round difference, ensuring that every family feels supported and cared for.



Watseka Community Renewal was founded with a heartfelt mission to preserve history and breathe new life into the Watseka community. They have completed community projects such as upgrading the Santa House for downtown Watseka and fundraise for community projects to restore the history of their town. Watseka

Community Renewal is dedicated to taking on additional initiatives aimed at preserving the city's heritage and fostering revitalization. With each project, they strive to honor Watseka's history while building a vibrant future for generations to come.

Project SUN, originally launched as our community's children's mental health initiative under fiscal sponsorship of the Community Foundation, has grown into a powerful force for youth and family well-being. What began as a collaborative effort focused on improving access to mental health resources has now evolved into a fully independent organization. We are proud to share that Project SUN has officially become its own 501(c)(3), continuing its mission with greater capacity and impact. This milestone marks a significant step forward in ensuring sustained, community-driven support for children's mental health across the region.

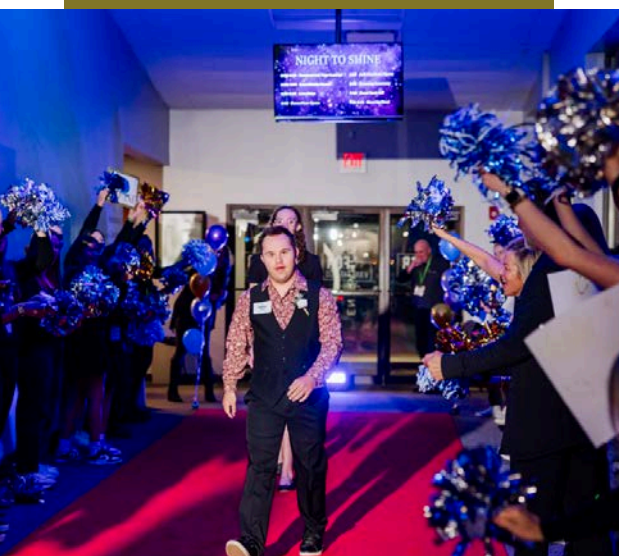




Community Stewardship

Night to Shine

GatheringPoint Church hosted its 6th Annual Night to Shine, a prom night experience for individuals with special needs. The event, originally launched by the Tim Tebow Foundation in 2014, once again brought the community together in a powerful celebration of dignity, joy, and unconditional love. 185 honored guests arrived to a true VIP experience, beginning with a walk down the red carpet and continuing through an evening filled with dancing, karaoke, limousine rides, and heartfelt moments.



Each guest was paired with a dedicated volunteer "buddy" for the night, ensuring a safe and personal experience for everyone. Over 450 volunteers, ages 14 and older, gave their time, energy, and compassion to make the event a success. Their presence reflected the mission of GatheringPoint Church—to serve the community with love and intention. For many volunteers, the night was a powerful reminder of the beauty and value in every individual. A special part of the evening was the respite room, thoughtfully prepared for parents and caregivers. While their loved ones enjoyed the festivities, these often-overlooked heroes had the chance to relax, connect with one another, and witness their children experience a moment of pure joy.

The culmination of the night came when each guest was crowned king or queen of the prom, an emotional highlight that underscored the heart behind the event. In a world that often overlooks individuals with special needs, Night to Shine stood as a radiant declaration that they are valued, loved, and worthy of celebration.

Thanks to the generous support of a grant and the dedication of volunteers, Night to Shine 2025 at GatheringPoint Church was offered at no cost to families, ensuring that finances were never a barrier to participation.

For the guests, their families, and the volunteers who served, Night to Shine was far more than a prom. It was a night of deep connection, shared joy, and a powerful reminder of what it means to truly love and serve our neighbors.



Empowering Youth through Track & Field

The Vipers Track Club (VTC) continues to make significant strides in empowering young athletes from historically disadvantaged communities, such as Kankakee where the poverty rate stands at 28.8% unemployment hovers at 9.9%, VTC's presence is not only purposeful—it is vital. Understanding the deep socio-economic challenges these communities face, VTC has committed to making track and field accessible to all student-athletes, regardless of financial barriers. The organization does this through a robust scholarship and sponsorship program that lies at the heart of its mission: to instill leadership, vision, inspiration, passion, dedication, and mental toughness in every participant.

The impact of these programs cannot be overstated. Many of the athletes who receive full sponsorships are navigating extraordinarily difficult life circumstances, including homelessness or the incarceration of a parent. For these youth, VTC is more than a track club—it's a source of stability, a path to empowerment, and a launching pad for future success.

The Vipers track club has grown over the past 3 years, now servicing 80+ athletes. Over 100 student-athletes over the past 13 years have gone to college on academic and athletic track scholarships

By planting roots in communities with the greatest need and providing meaningful support, the Vipers Track Club exemplifies what it means to lead with purpose and heart. Through its continued outreach and investment in young lives, VTC is not only building better athletes—it's building stronger communities.





Robert K. Dunn

Healing Through Horses: Dream Catcher Farms Rescue Youth Connect Program

At Dream Catcher Farms Rescue, every year brings new possibilities for the nearly 100 youth who walk through its gates. Ranging in age from 4 to 18, these young participants come from diverse backgrounds—including foster care and group homes—where they and their families are seeking healing, connection, and personal growth. Thanks to the nonprofit's Youth Connect Program, these children are not only learning new skills, but transforming their lives.

The Youth Connect Program at Dream Catcher Farms Rescue is more than just an opportunity to learn to ride horses. It is a structured, intentional experience where each child is paired with a horse, forming a deep, lasting bond. This relationship teaches them respect, responsibility, compassion, trust, patience, and empathy. The horses themselves are more than just animals, they are teachers and companions. Working with horses, which to many are large and unfamiliar animals, teaches youth nonviolent conflict resolution. As the youth care for and communicate with the horses, they learn that aggression or frustration won't achieve results. Instead, the horses respond to calm, patient behavior, teaching the children valuable lessons about managing their emotions and resolving conflicts peacefully.

Beyond the core horsemanship activities, Dream Catcher Farms Rescue goes even further to support families in need. The farm provides essential services like a food pantry, clothing closet, and school supplies, making a meaningful impact on the wider community.



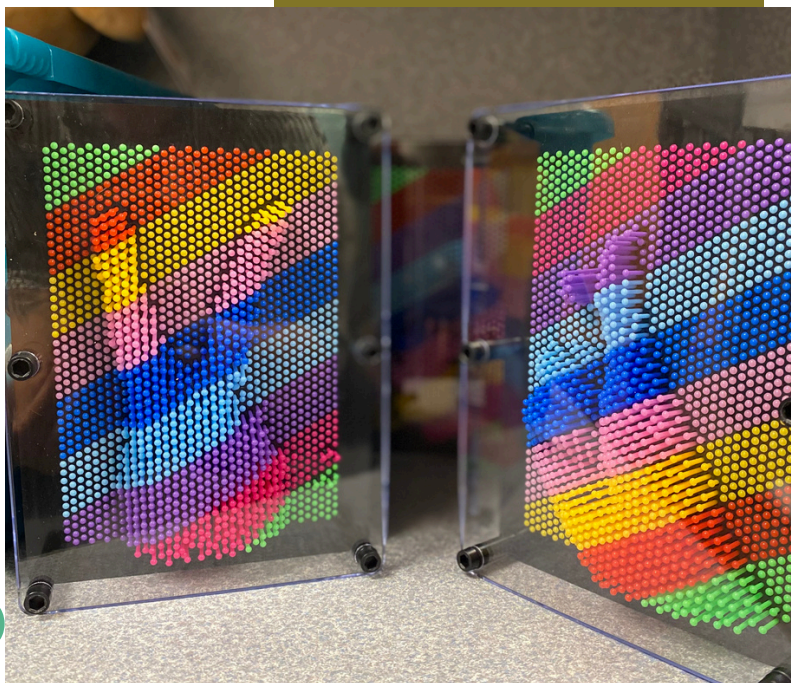
Pathways: Mobile Community Tool Box

Riverside Medical Center's Pathways Program provides a continuum of community-based mental health treatment for children and adolescents. These include adolescent mental health counselors which provide school-based counseling in nine Kankakee County schools, psychiatrists who support community mental health agencies beyond Riverside facilities, and group-based treatment for children ages 5-17 at their Bradley Atrium center.

Pathways began providing Theraplay Sunshine Circles at the Kankakee Area YMCA with a vision to expand access by going to where needs exist. As Pathways continues to capacity-build, it was the goal to create a Mobile Community Tool Box that mixes and matches age-appropriate tools with play/art/music engagement experiences supported by interchangeable sensory tools and resources.

This program demonstrates meeting a child at their place of need as clinicians need to adapt an interaction with a play therapy model or incorporate art, music or sensory tools. Mobile Community Tool Box can incorporate sensory and fidget tools, resources that aid teachers, students and families to cope with and adapt to presenting needs.

Adolescent mental health counselors provide 84 hours of service a week in schools throughout the county. These mobile toolkits provide therapists with resources and tools to assist adolescents with their work, which previously, a therapist provided these out of their own pocket. Students can bring these home and build their own toolkits which empowers families to continue healing.



Grants Distributed

Bonfield EUMC Pass Through Fund

Bonfield EUMC

Community Stewardship Fund

GatheringPoint Church

Let's Ketchup

MCA Senior Adult Day Center

Riverside Healthcare Foundation

Still I Rise

The Vipers Track Club

Woody Williams Foundation, Inc.



Communityworks Endowment Fund

Blessings in a Backpack

Catholic Charities - Diocese of Joliet

Central Citizens' Library District

Child Network

Farmworker and Landscaper Advocacy Project

Harbor House

Herscher CUSD 2

Kankakee Area YMCA

Kankakee Community College Baby Talk Program

Kankakee County Health Department

Let's Ketchup

Morning Star Church

Pledge for Life Partnership

Riverside Healthcare Foundation

Sweet Darren's Foundation

Dennis & Georgia Hess Fund

Boy Scouts of America

Good Shepherd Manor

Harbor House

Kankakee Area YMCA

Kankakee Community College Foundation

Kankakee County Training Center for the Disabled, Inc.

Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod

Marco Lutheran Church

Olivet Nazarene University

Prairieview Lutheran Foundation

Riverside Healthcare Foundation

St. Paul's Lutheran Church & School

Tunnels to Towers Foundation

United Way of Kankakee & Iroquois Counties

Uplifted Care - Hospice of Kankakee Valley

Wright In Kankakee

Fine Arts Fund

Country Theatre Workshop

Kankakee Valley Symphony Orchestra

Kankakee Valley Theatre Association

River Valley Special Recreation Association

Wright In Kankakee

Florence McMullen Fund

Kankakee Community College

Johnson Downs Fund

Kankakee Area YMCA

Kankakee Area YMCA Endowment Fund

Kankakee Area YMCA

Kankakee Development Fund

Kankakee Development Corporation

Kankakee Library Fund

Kankakee Public Library

Project SUN Fund

Kankakee Area YMCA

River Conservation Fund

Riverfront Trail Fund



Robert K. Dunn Perpetual Trust Fund

Child Network

Dream Catcher Farms Rescue Corp

Kankakee Area YMCA

Northern Illinois Food Bank

Spirit of the Sol Inc NFP

The Salvation Army of Kankakee County

The Vipers Track Club

Rosie Fund

Agape Community Outreach Mission

Clove Alliance

Harbor House

The Salvation Army of Kankakee County

United Way of Iroquois County Fund

United Way of Kankakee & Iroquois Counties

United Way of Kankakee Fund

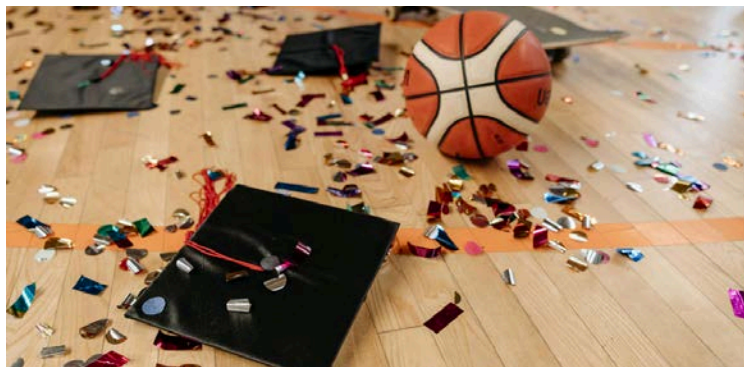
United Way of Kankakee & Iroquois Counties

Wilking - Schatz Memorial Fund

Arc of Iroquois County

Clifton Community Food Pantry

Partnering with local school districts for scholarship programs allows CFKRV to streamline the process for donors, applicants, and schools through our online scholarship platform and universal application. With six active foundation scholarships, the Herscher High School Scholarship Program, and the addition of Manteno High School scholarships this year, we're making it easier than ever to connect students with funding opportunities. Last year, we awarded over \$96,000 in scholarships, and with these new partnerships, we are looking forward to the increased opportunities available for students to reach their post graduation goals.



Herscher High School Scholarships

A Just Better Foundation Tiger Scholarship

Miranda Paetsch

Albert A. & Elizabeth Wheeler Mau Memorial Scholarship

Bennett Crane

Caitlin Poppie Memorial Scholarship Fund

Kennedi Huston

Dr. Lawrence T. Jacobson Leadership Memorial Scholarship

Jilyan Miner

Herscher Athletic Booster Club Award

Gerrit Osenga, Mary Kanak

Herscher FFA Alumni Foundation Scholarship

Ava Smolkovich, Kevin Harrington, Shelby Theisen

Herscher High School Alumni Association Scholarship

Delaney Rogers, Lilly McIntyre

Herscher High School Music Boosters Scholarship

Brayden Schuitema, Lillian Fenton, Sophia Brozis

Herscher High School Sports Fan Scholarship

Alexandra Decman, Mia Dalcanton, Paul Azzarelli,

Tyler Bayston

Herscher Lions Club Scholarship

Dylan Miller, Jilyan Miner

Herscher Senior of the Month Scholarship

Allie Kohl, Benjamin Siedentop, Emma Powers,

Katelyn Borshnack, Kayla Scanlon, Leroy Cloonen,

Lily Stevens

Jaden Alexander Jaime

Rebecca Bond

2023-2024 Foundation Scholarships

African American Civic Leaders Scholarship

Bryson Daniels, Jerika Harris

Do It Stevie's Way Foundation Scholarship

Allie Kohl, Avary Tomic, Brandon Abbott,

Dominic Brucato, Dorothy Harms,

Heidi Lovell, Jesselle Joseph, Kayla Scanlon,

Kyla McIntyre, Lily Stevens, Miranda Paetsch,

Reese Parker, Tara DePoister, Tessa Chico,

Vaari Patel

Donna J. Seggebruch Scholarship

Heidi Lovell, Jesselle Joseph

Erica Lynn Paulissen Scholarship

Avary Tomic, Mary Kanak

John Locke Memorial Scholarship

Delaney Panazzo, Ella Gessner, Katherine Gaffney

Mallory Kelly, Taras Stynk

Kent Weakley Creative Scholarship Fund

Jordyn M Galle

Patricia A. Long Memorial Scholarship

Lily Christine Stevens

Randy Lehnus Vocational Scholarship

Conner Massie-Devore, Keenan Hubly,

Lydia Schultz

Rich Jensen Scholarship

Jack Feth

Robert & Thelma Webber Scholarship

Kayla Scanlon

Stacy & Chris Skarstad Memorial Scholarship

Delaney Rogers, Lilly McIntyre

The Riley Family Vocational Scholarship

Caleb Fowler, Karen Garcia Perez

Tim Orwig Memorial Scholarship

Katelyn Borshnack, Jaden Jaime

U2CT Scholarship

Bennett Crane, Delaney Rogers,

Dylan Martin Miller, Jillian Laird, Jilyan Miner,

Katelyn Borshnack, Kayla Scanlon,

Leroy Cloonen, Lily Stevens

Village of Herscher Police Department Scholarship

Mr Jaden Alexander Jaime

Zayla Mitsdarffer Memorial Scholarship

Dylan Martin Miller



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**Connecting people who care with
causes that matter since 1982.**

(© 05/25, Community Foundation of Kankakee River Valley)

Platinum
Transparency
2025
Candid.

CFNS

**ACCREDITED
FOUNDATION**