



The Essential Piece

701 S. Harrison Avenue, Kankakee, IL 60901 815-939-1611 www.cfkrv.org

Summer 2018



A Piece from Nicole

Dear friends,

No matter the size of the pieces – 500 small ones or 50 large ones – I love putting together puzzles. For me, it's the thrill of bringing the pieces together to create an image that I enjoy and can share with others.

Every puzzle has two essential pieces – the first piece and the last piece. Without one, you can't get started; without the other, you can't finish what you started.

YOU are The Essential Piece of the Community Foundation of Kankakee River Valley. Your involvement is the key piece that brings ideas and initiatives to life to improve wellness and well-being in Kankakee and Iroquois Counties.

Thanks to your partnership, citizens in our counties have fantastic opportunities to achieve a holistic lifestyle, to continue their education, and to assist others in need. This newsletter shares examples of the difference your collaboration with CFKRV has made and of the lives that have been touched.

YOU are The Essential Piece of CFKRV, and I thank you for your generous support of time, talent, and treasure.

Nicole Smolkovich
Executive Director

Breaking News! CFKRV Awarded \$200,000 Grant for Children's Mental Health

The Community Foundation of Kankakee River Valley has been awarded a \$200,000 13-month planning grant from the Illinois Children's Healthcare Foundation. It will enable behavioral and physical healthcare providers, schools, parents, youth, and other community organizations to develop a coordinated system of care for children (ages 0 to 21) who are experiencing environmental trauma, stress, anxiety, or depression.

Nicole Smolkovich, executive director for CFKRV explains, "Project SUN (Strengthening and Unifying our Network) will provide multiple access points to a comprehensive and integrated mental health care system to meet the needs of the whole child. It is a family-driven approach that leverages the best components of our physicians, schools, courts, and faith-based and civic groups."

CFKRV is one of five organizations chosen for the grant. The application process brought together more than 40 community leaders, including 12 Kankakee County school districts, Riverside Medical Center, Presence St. Mary's Hospital, the Helen Wheeler Mental Health Center, churches, and the juvenile court system.

Project planning will begin in October 2018. "This achievement shows the dedication of our entire community to the greater good of our children, and it meets one of CFKRV's major mission initiatives," Smolkovich said.

Granted!

In 2017, our Communityworks Fund awarded over \$78,000 in grants to 23 worthy cause organizations pursuing programs in early childhood education, land use and protection, and workforce development.

This year, CFKRV is on track to award a record-setting \$100,000+ in grants to a variety of worthy cause non-profit organizations in Kankakee and Iroquois Counties.

Here's a snapshot of three initiatives from 2017 that touched individuals of all ages throughout Kankakee and Iroquois Counties.

Central Citizens' Library District **\$3,000 Grant for Family Reading Kits** **and Parent Education Sessions (CUSD#4)**

Last year, the library prepared 105 Family Reading Kits for preschool children and their parents and caregivers. The kits, containing age- and skill-appropriate books and activities, were checked out by patrons a record-setting 400 times!

Kinley, an energetic four-year-old, needed assistance with socialization and cognitive issues. Her preschool teacher recommended the library's Family Reading Kits to her parents and gave them a list of skills to work on at home.

Since then, Kinley's patience and comprehension have improved remarkably. Now, she has learned to share and to wait her turn. And, her alphabet recall and pattern recognition skills are stronger than ever.



In fact, Kinley often checks out a Family Reading Kit on her own when she attends Storytime at the library, and she has developed a love of books that is sure to grow

throughout her life. She's even on track to read 1,000 books before she enters kindergarten in the fall (1,000 Books Before Kindergarten program).

Dennis J. Smith Legacy Foundation **\$1,500 for Gingerbread House Project**

The holidays were extra sweet – and delicious! – for 423 preschool children last year when they decorated and frosted gingerbread houses and cookies – a new and exciting experience for many of them.



Now in its fifth year, the Gingerbread

House Project (in the Manteno, Herscher, Kankakee, and Bourbonnais school districts) has become somewhat of a holiday tradition for three- to five-year-old Head Start students, as well as for their parents, many of whom attend "gingerbread house day" to help decorate and snitch licks of frosting with their kids!

Teachers are equally excited about the project. Here are some of their comments.

"It's pure joy. Parents were able to spend quality time with their children."

"Our hope is that these young families will value the time they have with their children and establish holiday traditions of their own."

"You can see the pride the children have for their gingerbread houses as they walk to the bus, wanting to show everyone what they made."

"The students and parents were so happy, excited, and engaged!"

Bradley Bourbonnais High School \$5,000 for Robotics Team Ironclad

Last year, participation in the Ironclad robotics team grew to 120 students from Bradley Bourbonnais Community High School, Herscher High School (the Ti-Gears), and St. George School (Lego League). This program helps students develop and refine their STEM skills (science, technology, English, math) to build controlled "bots" that they enter in competitions.

Three of Ironclad's most accomplished students are taking their creativity and leadership experience to new heights and careers.

Drake Provost was a finalist at the Robotics World Championships for the prestigious Dean's List Award.

Allison Quinlan is the first female to win the Frima Lukatskaya Scholarship in Computer Science, endowed by PayPal creator Max Levchin.

Maggie Barclay has been honored with a full scholarship in engineering to the Illinois Institute of Technology.



(left to right) Nicole Smolkovich, executive director, CFKRV; Drake Provost, Allison Quinlan, and Maggie Barclay, from BBCHS



Thank You, Sponsors!

Thanks to the dedication of these sponsors, CFKRV celebrated a successful Annual Awards Luncheon on May 17, 2018.

- Morgan Stanley Wealth Management
- Health Alliance
- Olivet Nazarene University
- Iroquois Federal
- CSL Behring
- Presence St. Mary's Hospital
- Economic Alliance of Kankakee County
- Kankakee County Chamber of Commerce
- Kankakee Valley Construction Company
- Borschnack Pelletier & Company
- Harvest View Senior Living

Here We Grow Again!

For the past 35 years, CFKRV has worked to improve the quality of life for residents of Kankakee and Iroquois Counties. Here are highlights of a few of our success stories.



- **Riverfront Trail:** Dedicated the pedestrian and bicycle bridge, linking Kankakee to Perry Farm, Phase 3 of this healthy living initiative
- **Success by 6:** Initiating action strategies to improve the social competence and emotional maturity of children in Kankakee and Iroquois Counties
- **WorkKankakee.org:** Launched a web portal for students, educators, and job seekers, providing access to internships, scholarships, jobs, and more
- **Rosie Fund Grants**
Awarded much-needed funds to organizations such as Harbor House and KC-CASA
- **Quality of Life Competition**
Awarding two \$5,000 grants for programs that improve quality of life in our counties in 2018

Connecting People Who Care with Causes That Matter:

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A special note of gratitude goes out to Karl Kruse, retiring board director for CFKRV. Thank you for your years of service.

FOR GOOD. FOREVER.

Please consider including CFKRV in your will and estate planning. It is a wonderful way to continue your legacy and to ensure ours. For information, call Nicole at 815-939-1611.



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