

## What We Have Learned and Where We Are Headed



*“The Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation has weathered many ebbs and flows through tumultuous times.”*

This was my opening sentence from our Foundation’s newsletter in February. I wrote it before the global COVID-19 pandemic began to affect our local communities, and before the cries for justice and to reform institutional policies and practices were amplified by the senseless murder of George Floyd at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer. I don’t think anyone could have imagined how tumultuous this period in our lives would really be.

This period in time continues to dramatically change the way we live, work and gather. For some, this moment is a time of reflection, coming to terms with the harsh reality that not all of us live in a society that treats people with dignity and respect, regardless of their race or ethnicity.

This is an extraordinary time to learn from. We must use the lessons and experiences from the past seven months to build a deeper understanding of why disparities exist among us, to build empathy and to nurture our community. I choose to be hopeful.

This hope is inspired by you. During this time of incredible distress, I have witnessed so many people be willing to build bridges for a more socially just community and to come together to help those most vulnerable. I am moved by the generosity of those who have supported those on the front lines responding to the pandemic through our Rapid Response and Recovery Fund. I want to especially thank Ken and Patty Hunt for their \$250,000 challenge, enabling donors to double their impact via this vital resource. I am sincerely grateful to our nonprofit organizations in western Cook County who

quickly adjusted their supportive services to respond to those in need and keep them safe from this deadly virus. In just seven months, the Foundation and its family of donors have mobilized more than \$1 million in resources in response to COVID-19, an amazing achievement that will help so many individuals and families.

I am very proud of our Board of Directors’ leadership and support during this critical time. With conviction and compassion, they swiftly voted to utilize our endowment to create the Rapid Response and Recovery Fund and match the first \$100,000 in donations. I am also proud and thankful to our staff for their unwavering dedication to ensuring we continue to provide a high level of service to our donors and nonprofit community.

The long-term effects of COVID-19 on our region are uncertain, but the Foundation’s commitment to securing the well-being of our community is not. We will continue to work with our donors, village and township officials, our nonprofit sector and so many others to find solutions to issues that are critical for us to move forward. The Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation has weathered many ebbs and flows and we will continue to do so. We are here with you in solidarity.

With deep appreciation and in partnership,

[see inside for more on the Fund impact](#)

# Giving is a ‘Wonderful Way of Life’ for Charitable Couple



When the COVID-19 pandemic began to affect Oak Park-River Forest and surrounding communities, Joanne and Ted Despotes rallied around the Foundation’s call for donations to its Rapid Response and Recovery Fund. The couple say Foundation staff have earned their trust, which made their choice to support organizations helping front line workers and vulnerable families and individuals an easy one.

“When I read who some of the recipients were I said, ‘Oh, it’ll be a lot easier for me to give [to OPRFCF] and let them figure out specifically who to give funds to.’ Because I trust them,” says Joanne. “Honestly, there’s so much need and the Rapid Response and Recovery Fund is where the money needs to be. I think it’s a great thing that the Foundation is doing.”

In addition to their recent contributions, the Despotes have made unrestricted donations and included the Foundation in their estate planning. They value the Foundation’s knowledge about the needs of the communities it serves today – and with eyes toward the future.

“The Foundation is still going to be supporting the types of organizations we are already committed to, so it seemed like a good place to make a legacy gift,” Joanne says. “We know that we’re supporting a community we really love.”

Active participants with several local non-profits – Ted and Joanne both volunteer for the Nineteenth Century Charitable Association where they are members, Joanne co-chairs the annual Crop Walk, which raised its largest total during its first-ever “virtual walk” in May, and both are closely involved with

First United Church of Oak Park – they encourage potential donors to do some homework.

“One piece of advice I have for anyone contributing to an organization, this one or others: Allow the gift to go into their general fund so they can make decisions about where it’s going to go when they need it to, versus telling them where it has to go,” says Ted. “It’s a way to spread your donation as far as you can.”

As children of immigrants, both Joanne and Ted are grateful they’ve had opportunities to work hard and create savings. They consider their contributions a way to support both community and country.

“Giving becomes a way of life when you do it,” says Joanne. “I think it’s a wonderful way of life.”

## Estate Planning With an Eye Toward Community

*Melissa H. De Vries is a partner at Hoogendoorn & Talbot LLP. Her practice focuses on estate planning, estate administration, special needs planning, elder law, tax planning and preparation, charitable planning and advising charitable organizations. Here she shares some advice on estate planning with the broader community in mind.*



What silver linings have you discovered during these challenging times? For many, it’s spending more time with family. For some it has been time in person, as outside social opportunities are limited. For others, it has been more intentional visits with family by Zoom when they cannot gather in person.

As we think of our families, our thoughts may also turn to estate planning and how we intend to provide for our families when we are gone. While the concept of stewardship of our assets may start with considering how to pass wealth on to our families, it need not end there. Many of us believe that stewardship also entails providing for our communities — whether they be geographic, faith, learning, arts, social welfare or other forms of community.

There are so many wonderful ways to provide for your community in the estate planning context. An obvious option is to direct in your will or trust that a certain amount or percentage of your estate pass to favorite charitable organizations upon your death. Just be sure that your attorney understands

how to properly specify that these gifts are funded with taxable retirement plans, so there is less tax for your family to pay when you are gone.

There are other options that may be less familiar, but which can provide you with lifetime benefits and a current income tax deduction. These are referred to as “planned giving” vehicles. A charitable gift annuity set up through a charitable organization provides you with a lifetime stream of income much higher than you would receive from savings accounts. A charitable remainder trust provides you with a lifetime stream of income and can be used to avoid or at least defer capital gains taxes on the sale of low-basis assets. A gift of a remainder interest in a home or other real estate provides you with an immediate charitable deduction, while allowing you to remain in the home for the rest of your life.

A skilled estate planning attorney should be able to discuss these and other death-related and lifetime charitable planned giving options with you and incorporate them into your estate plan. Just be clear with your attorney that you see the “objects of your bounty” as your family and your community!

# FLAP Helps Workers in Industries Affected by COVID-19 Stay Safe and Secure

For 21 years, the mission of the Farmworker and Landscaper Advocacy Project (FLAP) has been to improve working conditions and support immigrant workers' rights through community outreach and education, information and referrals. The organization also partners with other groups to fight human labor trafficking and prevent family separations by helping immigrants secure dual citizenship for their children.

FLAP has received Rapid Response and Recovery Fund grants totaling \$35,000. The funds have allowed the organization to provide financial assistance to low income clients to supplement wage loss caused by COVID-19 and expand its services in Cicero, Berwyn, Maywood, Oak Park and River Forest.

"With this grant, we're focusing on farmworkers, landscapers, nursery and greenhouse employees, food processing factory workers and restaurant workers in the western Cook County area," says Alexandra Sossa, executive director of FLAP. "In addition to money for rent and utilities we are also distributing safety gear, like masks and gloves, to help workers protect themselves from the coronavirus, and information about where to get tested if they believe they may be infected."

Many Latino workers in the landscaping, hospitality and service industries have lost their jobs as a result of the state lockdown and restrictions on restaurants and other businesses. FLAP aids this vulnerable population in finding resources such as food banks, free or affordable health care, assistance filing for disability or worker's compensation claims, and legal information.

"We're helping the workers, but at the same time, we're helping business owners, because it's important that when they re-open their employees are still here," Sossa explains. "They are not moving away in hopes of getting a job because they couldn't pay rent here. It provides stability not just for the business, but for the community."

To learn more about FLAP, go to [flapillinois.org](http://flapillinois.org). To discover how the Foundation supports nonprofits through grants, donor funds and training programs, or to donate to the Rapid Response and Recovery Fund, visit [www.oprfcf.org](http://www.oprfcf.org) or contact Rhea Yap or Elizabeth Chadri at 708-848-1560.



## Reporting Social Work Inspired Grant Winner to Get Involved

During an unsettling year, Celine Reinoso discovered the kind of clarity that will have a lasting positive impact. Reinoso is the 2020 recipient of the OPRFCF's Kathleen Marian

Garrigan Leadership Fund Award, which provides financial aid to 18- to 25-year-olds who have completed an extended domestic community service project and are transitioning to school or work.

"I'm thankful for the award, and for the opportunity to tell my story because that's what I try to empower each person I work with to do – to express the often silenced stories of young people working in this field, or women of color working in this field, or immigrants," Reinoso says.

She says her desire to serve and lead has its seeds in her own story of the forced separation of her Filipino-American family when she was a child, which involved her returning with her mother to live for a time in the Philippines. Born from that experience,

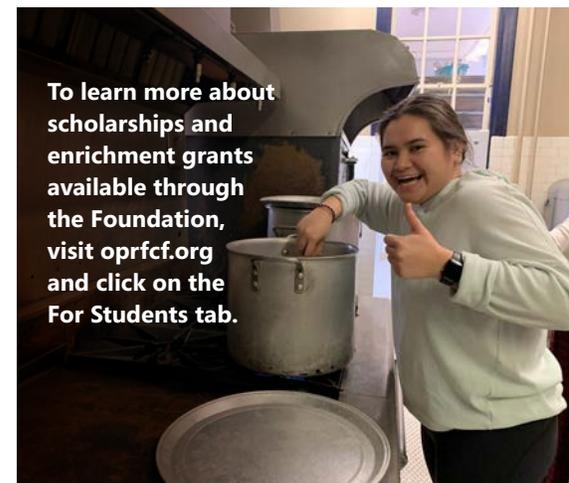
her advocacy for marginalized families and individuals and her commitment to accompany them through healing gained momentum during college. Before graduating from St. Louis University in May 2019, the journalism major said she was reporting "meaningful stories of people doing direct service work and realized: I don't just want to write about people doing it, I want to actually do it."

Following graduation, she volunteered with El Paso Villa Maria in Texas, a transitional shelter that provides services for women affected by complex circumstances related to homelessness, such as domestic violence, addiction, abuse and mental health. She interacted with residents daily until COVID-19 began to spread. Although different from her face-to-face encounters, she realized while working remotely that she could continue helping clients on paperwork that can be difficult to navigate, such as résumés, job applications and government forms.

"Each day I learn something new, whether it be about the world, social work, service, my clients, or myself," she wrote in her

application. "However, the most important lesson I learned, which I will carry with me through my career, is the importance of empathy, compassion and accompaniment in social justice work."

Reinoso will begin studies for a graduate degree in social work at the University of Missouri-St. Louis in January 2021.



**To learn more about scholarships and enrichment grants available through the Foundation, visit [oprfcf.org](http://oprfcf.org) and click on the For Students tab.**



COVID-19  
**Rapid Response and  
 Recovery Fund**

Total resources raised from  
 Community Foundation efforts:

**\$1,053,000**

Total funds granted to date:

**\$810,000**

**\$573,000**

fundraised from 470 gifts  
 from the community including  
 the Hunt Family Match and  
 LemonAid 2020



**\$330,000**

Grants received  
 through Foundation  
 advocacy



IL COVID

**\$150,000**

Community  
 Foundation seed  
 money

To date, 40 community organizations  
 have benefited from our efforts and  
 the generosity of community.  
 The remaining resources will be granted  
 this fall and winter 2021.

*as of 10/15/20*

Learn more about our growing  
 list of grantees at  
[oprfcf.org/impact-stories](http://oprfcf.org/impact-stories)

# Donate Now to Help Support Your Community

I am deeply grateful to the community for its support of the Rapid Response and Recovery Fund. In a short period of time, a million dollars was raised and immediately deployed to great effect.

This is a testament to the strength of our community, and also to the strength of our Community Foundation. Years of dynamic and thoughtful engagement with donors, nonprofits, and government agencies throughout our region made it possible for the Foundation to mobilize so quickly to gather and deploy critical COVID-19 relief funds. Unrestricted gifts from caring community members like you have made the Foundation's continuing operations and this formidable achievement possible. Your continued investment in the Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation is an investment in the community itself. Please join me and my family in supporting the OPRFCF with a gift to the annual fund. Thank you for all that you do!

With deep gratitude,

Donna T. Myers

To give to our Annual Fund visit [www.oprfcf.org](http://www.oprfcf.org)

*your* **Community**  
 *your* **Foundation**





## Kevin M. Robinson Joins the Foundation's Board of Directors

Kevin M. Robinson and his wife have lived in Oak Park for just over 27 years.

"I can pinpoint the exact date, because a month later, my first child was born," he says. Now the proud parents of three, they continue to enjoy the village's wonderful restaurants and concerts in the park. It's not unusual to find Robinson walking or biking through his neighborhood on the weekends.

The Community Foundation is pleased to welcome Robinson to its board of directors. He is senior managing director and general counsel of Guggenheim Investments, the global asset management and investment advisory division of Guggenheim Partners with more than \$220 billion in total assets across fixed income, equity and alternative strategies; and previously held senior positions with NYSE Euronext, Inc.; ABN Amro, Inc.; and the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. He possesses valuable experience in legal and regulatory guidance related to investments, as well as management and pro bono work.

"Kevin has extensive knowledge of the legal and regulatory aspects of asset management," says Donna Myers, chair of the board. "His experience and perspective will play an important role in shaping the Foundation's future direction."

Closer to home, he was a longtime member of the Oak Park Plan Commission, and has served on the board of Oak Park Youth Baseball & Softball as well as on the organizational development committee for Housing Forward, a West Cook-based nonprofit that works to transition individuals and families from uncertain living conditions to housing stability.

"I appreciate that I'm joining the board at an inflection point in terms of how the Foundation sees itself and its mission," Robinson says. "As I share with my kids, we as a society shouldn't guarantee outcomes, but we should as best we can try to guarantee that opportunities provided are fair and equitable. I think that it is even more important now, given where we are as a nation, to focus on underserved communities and organizations that help them, and try to come up with fair and equitable ways for those organizations and the individuals they serve to succeed.

"I look forward to being able to use my expertise and experiences to support the Foundation as it works to strengthen operations, increase funding for local initiatives, and foster supportive relationships in the coming decade."

### 2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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The Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation wishes to extend special thanks to outgoing board member Michele Donley for her years of service.



### In Memoriam: Moore William Peregrine

*Contributed by Henry Kranz, former long-time staff member*

Moore Peregrine has passed away at age 93. Born in Oak Park in 1926, he volunteered for duty with the U.S. Air Force and served in Europe 1945 to '46. He became a partner in his father's law firm in 1955 and worked as an estate and trust attorney in Chicago and River Forest until his retirement.

Moore's legacy lives on in the very existence of our Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation. In the 1950s, he saw that the field of charitable community trusts and foundations was small outside of large municipal areas. Such things had been the provenance of great wealth, family foundations and the like – but there were relatively few community foundations.

"An old Oak Park family left what I recall was in excess of a million dollars to the Chicago Trust," he later said. "The obvious question was, why didn't they leave at least part of that sum to Oak Park? The answer was that there was no simple way to do so."

He worked with several others to build the legal framework that brought the Foundation's initial assets together. Working with local banks, Moore and his compatriots created a local way to give back to the community. He also served for a time as the Foundation's president and then counsel for many years.

After retiring from the law in 1997, he moved to Frankfurt, Michigan, where he served as a National Park Service volunteer at Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore, yet another chapter in a life dedicated to helping others.

Without his dedication and years of support, the Foundation would not be here today. The Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation offers its deepest condolences to Moore's extended family and friends.



OAK PARK-RIVER FOREST  
**Community Foundation**

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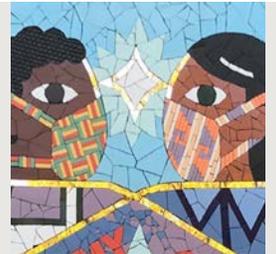
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# Community Connections



*your* **Community**  
 *your* **Foundation**



The mural featured on the front page is titled **You Are My Other Me** and is a 2020 public art project of the Oak Park Area Arts Council. The team of apprentices: Jenn Eisner, Darren Edwards, Zaria Gilmore, Ali Schiffner, Greta Olson, Emma Vejck, Atlan Arceo-Witzl and Master Artist, Carolyn Elaine.



Your gift plays a pivotal role in building a more vibrant community during this extraordinary time of need.

**DONATE TODAY: OPRCF.ORG**

