



MEDIA RELEASE

Celebrating West Virginia's Transformative Community Foundations on WV Day

Contact: Paul D. Daugherty, President & CEO at 304.692.9883 or paul@philanthropywv.org

Resiliency and generosity are in the DNA of West Virginians since the state's founding in 1863. At that time, the western counties of the then state of Virginia were realizing they had to rely on themselves to raise local resources (money, philanthropic support, businesses, trade, and other needs) for they were not coming from Richmond, Virginia.

On West Virginia's 158th Birthday, Philanthropy West Virginia is celebrating and recognizing this long-time Mountaineer spirit of working together and building up local resources with the release of its ***Transforming Rural: Accelerating Community-Based Philanthropy Report***. The work of West Virginia's community foundations over the past twenty plus years embodies the state's history of creating local resources and solutions for future generations. The report recognizes the spirit of working together and building up local community foundations which have more than quadrupled in the past 20 years.

"As part of West Virginia's birthday, we celebrate the Mountain State and our people's spirit of 'let's work together locally and build up community philanthropy'. This is exemplified in the innovation and collaboration of West Virginia's ever-growing community foundations," shares Paul D. Daugherty, president & chief executive officer of Philanthropy West Virginia.

Since 2000, West Virginia has experienced a significant growth of its community foundations which are working with local donors and organizations to transform our communities in amazing ways. Thanks to the leadership and investment of the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, Ford Foundation, WV's growing community foundations, thousands of donors, and other partners, West Virginians have fostered a tremendous support creating a broader base of charitable funds for our communities.

"Community foundations provide the means for citizens to identify local problems, and raise the capital to address those problems. The Benedum Foundation was pleased to support the Promotion of Philanthropy initiative in the first decade of this century to expand the network of community foundations in WV and Southwestern PA as a 'bottom-up' means of engaging individuals in philanthropy while building a sustainable infrastructure for charitable giving." Dr. Jim Denova, Vice President of the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation and who served as the senior program officer of the ***Promotion of Philanthropy*** initiative.

In the Benedum Foundation's recent assessment of the ***Promotion of Philanthropy*** initiative, it noted that, "Community philanthropy is not simply a mechanism for retaining generational wealth turnover, but also a key ingredient of a healthy nonprofit environment." It adds, that, "Community foundations represent local empowerment."

The strategic investments and wisdom of the Benedum Foundation along with the community foundation leaders has been transformative in several ways. A few highlights include:

- growing from a smaller group of 12 community foundations in 2000 with a combined asset value of \$125 Million directly serving 30 counties to a much larger 2020 present base of nearly 30 community foundations and affiliates with combined assets of at least half a billion dollars now directly serving 52 of West Virginia's 55 counties.
- According to 2019 data, WV's community foundations now invest more than \$18.5 million each year in our state's communities while still holding funds for centuries to come.
- Looking at recent events, WV's community foundations along with united ways have rallied in historic ways by generating 22 local/regional COVID relief funds that have provided critical grant funds (\$2.5 Million+) addressing the numerous medical, education, business, basic human needs, hunger, housing, and other challenges created by the pandemic and economic downturn.

Former Philanthropy WV Board Chair (2000-2006) and a key leader in the community foundation movement nationwide since 1999, Judy Sjostedt Ritchie shared, *"What began as a grassroots movement of local community foundations as the WV Community Foundations Consortium, grew into WV Grantmakers and later became Philanthropy WV, received a phenomenal boost when the Benedum Foundation embraced our vision of building community philanthropy across West Virginia. We had big dreams and strong leadership but lacked resources; we needed a partner who would believe in our work and invest in our infrastructure; and that, along with great encouragement, is what Dr. Jim Denova, and later, Mary Hunt, of Benedum brought to us."*

Sjostedt Ritchie added, *"We at the Parkersburg Area Community Foundation & Regional Affiliates, have experienced continuous growth from \$7.6M (1999) to more than \$75M (2021). Yet, we still have lots of work to do to ensure that West Virginia's communities can access sufficient resources so their citizens can think bigger and strive for better."*

On Monday, June 21, 2021, Philanthropy WV releases the report compiled by M. Miller Development Services showcasing this now broader and collaborative network of community foundations who are building up permanent funds to support communities now and for the next 158 plus years of the state.

Daugherty noted, *"As the past year has showcased, community foundations and all of philanthropy are critical infrastructure addressing community needs in partnership with nonprofits and businesses to ensure we can respond, recover, and thrive through all sorts of challenges and opportunities. WV's community foundations along with their partners can do incredible things by working with donors from all walks of life."* The pandemic postponed the report's release until 2021.

While Philanthropy WV has been hosting its programs and conferences virtually since March 2020, they look forward to showcasing the report and recognizing the community foundation and united way leadership in-person at the Appalachian Community Philanthropy Institute on August 10th and 11th.

To access the report, impact stories of community foundations in action, and details about the Appalachian Community Philanthropy Institute, visit: www.philanthropywv.org or call 304.517.1450.

Philanthropy WV is West Virginia's philanthropic leadership network representing private, family, corporate, community and public grantmaking foundations; corporate giving programs; private philanthropists; and professional advisors. Philanthropy WV is advancing our mission of "Strengthening Philanthropy in the Mountain State". For more information, visit: www.philanthropywv.org or follow on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn: [@PhilanthropyWV](https://twitter.com/PhilanthropyWV)