Update to Our Members
February 2026

The Northeast Michigan Women's Giving Circle Fund is a component fund of the Community Foundation for Northeast Michigan.

Greetings Northeast Michigan Women's Giving Circle (WGC) members and friends! I hope the New Year finds you in good health and enjoying the coziness of winter.

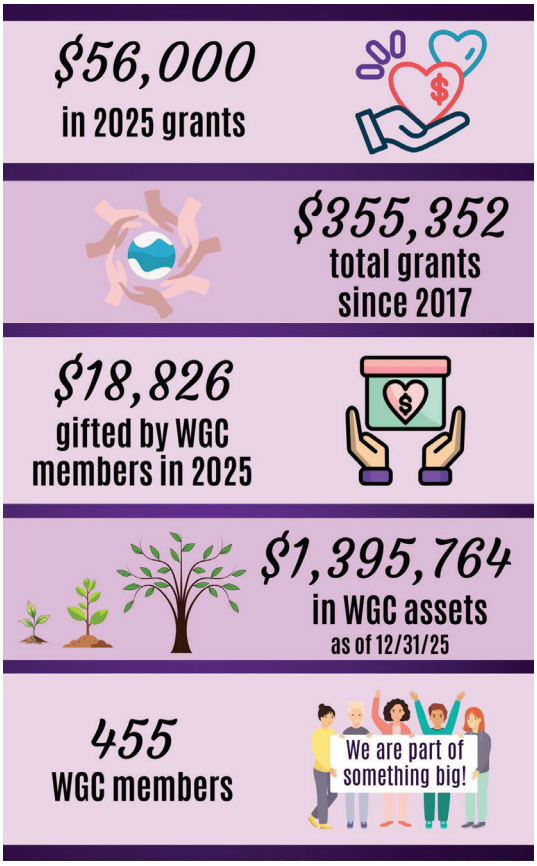
2025 was good to the Community Foundation for Northeast Michigan and the Women's Giving Circle. Among the highlights of the year:

- A record amount in grants awarded - a testament to the power of endowment
- Growth in endowed assets
- Great stories of the impact this fund is making

Your donations are making a real difference in our communities. I hope the stories shared by our grantees show you the impact you are having, and I hope the voices of your fellow members make you proud to be a WGC member. As we look to the future of the Women's Giving Circle, I hope you will consider sharing this newsletter with someone you know who may want to join this incredible group of people who are collectively a positive force for GOOD.

With gratitude,
Christine Hitch
Development and Marketing Director

WGC Annual Snapshot



Improving Communication to Save Lives



When someone goes missing, the impact ripples through families, friends, and the entire community, and fast, reliable response can make all the difference in the outcome. A $1,800 Women's Giving Circle grant is funding three years of Starlink internet service for the All County Search and Rescue Team (ACSAR), strengthening their ability to respond in the remote places where help is often needed most. In the past two years, ACSAR conducted 37 searches. By ensuring access to real-time maps, clear communication, and coordinated search efforts, this grant reflects a commitment to ensuring any community member who finds themselves lost has the best possible chance of being found and brought home safely. *Pictured above, volunteers gather for a briefing before heading out on a rescue mission.*

Thank you for your continued support in 2025!

Diamond Members

$10,000+ in total giving

Beach Hall
Marion E. Lamy+
Vernie Nethercut
Julie Wiesen*

Platinum Members

$5,000 - $9,999 in total giving

Ann Kelly Burton*
Midge Connon*
Priscilla Homola
Janet Pfeiffenberger+

Welcome to Our Newest WGC Members!

Gwen Downs Paradowski
Susan Learman
Nina O'Loughlin
Amy Peterman

Sterling Members

***$10 - $4,999 in total** giving*

Bonnie Abend
Anonymous
Dr. Avery Aten
Christie Bastow and Richard Burke
Christine Baumgardner
Carol Beatty
Valerie Beatty
Kristin Benghauser
Barbara Bruske
Pauline Buchner
Bill and Linda Clegg
Marcia Connolly
Michelle Cornish
Mari Crow
Julie Curtis
Genie Diamond
Jennifer Dingman
Gwen Downs Paradowski
Sue Eller+
Lora Greene
Doreen Hall
Joyce Harmon
Patrick and Anne Heraghty
Lisa Hilberg
Christine Hitch*
Mary Jane Thomson
Carl Kelly
Diana Kelly
Erin Kieliszewski
Brenda Kinnunen
Jackie Krawczak
John and Julie Kowalski
Pamela Krebs
Michelle LaBar
Nancy Lamp
Tom and Mary Lappan*
Susan Learman
Vicky Lindsay
Carol Lund
Marian Maasshoff

**** Founding members of the WGC***
+ Deceased

Betty Masters
Julie McCoy
Kathleen Melville-Hall
Catherine Moore
Amy Nadolsky
Nina O'Loughlin
Amy Peterman
Marian Prieur-Bastow
Doris Puls
Mary Pat Sabourin
Ann Skiba
Debra Staeb
Linda Suneson
Nancy Szejbach
Jacquelyn Timm*
Kelley Wilson
Sara Winter
WISE Investment Club
Judy Woizeschke
Delores Wojcicki

Honorary Gifts

Christie Bastow
Donna Bautel
Janice Boboltz
Ann Boucher
Marcia Connolly
Patricia Garant
Anne Gentry
Pam Heraghty
Vera Kavanaugh
Sue Keller
Debra Kruttlin
Carol LeFave
Carol Lund
Georgeann MacKinnon
Vanessa Mills
Nancy Nelson
Marian Prieur-Bastow
Donna Reinke

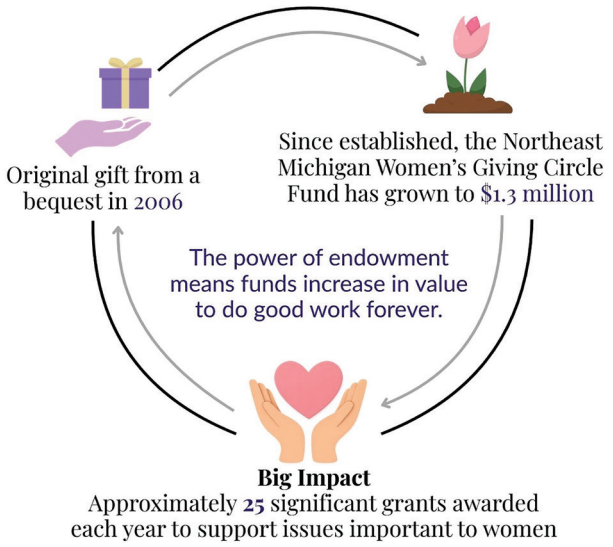
Memorial Gifts

Susan Lane Bastow
Clara Benghauser
Mary Davison
Anthony Demski
Julie Smith-Mandrick
Margaret Louise Manning
Madelyn Ratcliffe
Elizabeth Wirgau

Your Gifts Matter

and your generosity made an impact - thank you!

- Renewing your gift ensures that support for women and girls in our community continues to grow.
- Lasting change takes sustained care. Ongoing giving strengthens our endowment so the Women's Giving Circle can make a difference year after year.
- Together, we can keep showing up. Your renewed commitment helps ensure our WGC story continues.



Donate online at cfnem.org or by scanning the QR code with your smartphone. Checks can be mailed to CFNEM, P.O. Box 495, Alpena, MI 49707.

Northeast Michigan Women's Giving Circle - Grants in Action



Meeting Hunger with Compassion

At the Sunrise Side Food Pantry, compassion is at the center of everything they do. The volunteers - neighbors serving neighbors - pour their hearts into ensuring families across Alcona and Alpena Counties have food on the table. Housed at Hubbard Lake Baptist Church, the pantry's *Feeding the Hungry* program has been supported through Women's Giving Circle and Community Impact Grants. In 2025, a $3,500 WGC grant helped purchase food to serve over 160 families each month during twice-monthly distributions. That is more than double the number served just two years ago, and more than half are women and their families. As food costs rise and need continues to grow, this grant provided vital support, ensuring the pantry can continue meeting the community with dignity, care, and hope. *Pictured above, volunteers prepare for a January 2026 food distribution event.*

She Builds: Investing in Women



With support from a $3,000 WGC grant to Michigan Works! Northeast Consortium's *She Builds* program, local women and high school girls are being introduced to high-demand, high-wage skilled trades careers through mentorship, job shadowing, site visits, and skill-building workshops.

In January 2026, Michigan Works! held a *She Builds* event at Atlanta High School where Brandie Meisner, President of M & M Excavating, spoke with students, sharing her personal journey in the construction industry. Brandie highlighted the strong demand for skilled trades careers and their earning potential, and the critical need for more women in these fields, particularly in rural communities where exposure to these opportunities can be limited.

By breaking down stereotypes and opening doors to fields like construction, welding, HVAC, and heavy equipment operation, this support is helping young women see careers they may never have imagined as "for them." Your gifts help make programs like these possible!

Scan the QR codes below or navigate to cfnem.org, "Give" and "Women's Giving Circle" to see:

All 2025 WGC Grants

All WGC Members, Honorary, and Memorial Gifts since 2006

"I'm excited to be a new member of the Northeast Michigan Women's Giving Circle, joining a group of individuals who have the opportunity to make a positive impact through grantmaking. I love that these funds are used to foster the development and expansion of services which are enriching to our community."
-Amy Peterman, new WGC member



From Alpena to South Africa to the Top of the World

What began as a small group of women choosing strength, community, and self-belief grew into a world championship moment. With the help of a Women's Giving Circle grant to the Bearded Ladies Foundation, these women were able to travel to Durban, South Africa to compete at the World Powerlifting Congress Championship, and they brought home the title.

These women are rewriting what strength looks like at every age and every body size. They are showing young girls that champions can come from anywhere and anyone, reminding teens it's powerful to stand fully in your own strength, and proving to women over 30, 40, and beyond that it is never too late to build a healthier relationship with your body.

This is more than medals and records. It's about visibility, representation, and a simple but radical message: *women are strong, and strength changes lives.*

Your WGC Contact - Christine Hitch • Phone: 989.354.6881 • Email: chitch@cfnem.org

Northeast Michigan Women's Giving Circle

The power of giving grows when we give together.
Your support means everything.
Thank you for being a member of the Northeast Michigan Women's Giving Circle!

Community Foundation for NORTHEAST MICHIGAN
PO Box 495
Alpena, MI 49707

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