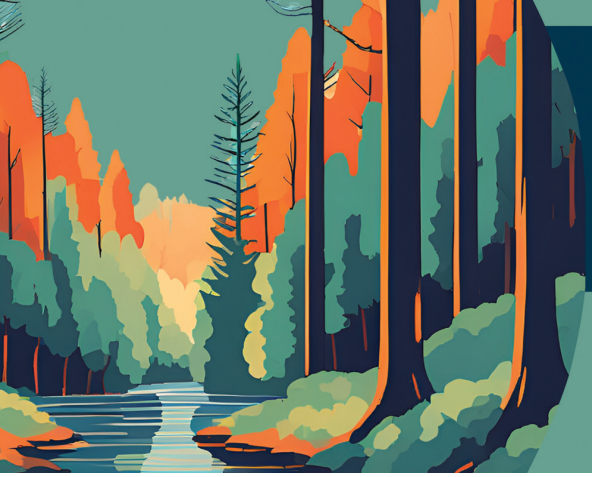


NORTH CENTRAL MICHIGAN COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Serving Crawford, Ogemaw, and Oscoda Counties

Update

Spring 2025

Urgent Needs Fund Reactivated Following Northern Michigan Ice Storm



In response to the devastating ice storm that affected much of northeast Michigan, the Urgent Needs Fund held through our lead foundation, Community Foundation for Northeast Michigan, was reactivated on April 1 to support those most impacted across the region. The fund is providing immediate assistance to local nonprofits serving people facing hardship due to the storm's aftermath, including in the North Central Michigan Community Foundation's service area.

CFNEM contributed $25,000 to make funds immediately available for use. The first grants totaling $96,800 were awarded by April 17 to provide basic necessities like food, water, blankets, and gas to those impacted by the storm, including in Crawford and Oscoda Counties. Short- and long-term needs are expected to continue. **Individuals and businesses who can give are welcome and encouraged to donate to support northern Michiganders impacted by the storm, and to support the region with long-term recovery and future preparedness efforts.**

Scan here to give online or visit ncmcf.org.

Grants from the Urgent Needs Fund will be directed to nonprofit organizations providing vital services such as access to food and basic hygiene, care for senior citizens, and assistance with other essential needs. Nonprofits serving one of the impacted counties and interested in applying for a grant should contact Christine Hitch at chitch@cfnem.org.



NCMCF Named "Organization of the Year"

The North Central Michigan Community Foundation was named "Organization of the Year" by the West Branch Area Chamber of Commerce. NCMCF wishes to extend its sincere gratitude to our donors, volunteers, and local nonprofit organizations that make our Community Foundation a strong and vibrant asset for the communities we serve in Crawford, Ogemaw, and Oscoda Counties.

The award was received at the Chamber's annual ball in February. NCMCF was also the recipient of the "Visionary Award" in 2019.

Featured Grants

NCMCF Grant Helps Restart Art Program in Mio



Middle and high school students from Mio AuSable School District were able to connect with art again! After many years of not having an active art program, a $1,500 NCMCF Community Impact Grant provided funds to purchase art supplies to jump start the program. The grant also helped with a field trip to the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Art teacher Sarah Belanger says one of the most important outcomes of the project is that because art supplies are expensive, the boost in supplies will make it easier for the school to budget for the program moving forward. She also says the field trip provided a unique opportunity for some students to travel further away from home than they had ever been.

“Field trips are always a fun excuse to miss school for the day, but I believe that this trip was truly meaningful to the art students who attended because they were interacting with a subject they love,” Sarah said.



Grant Supports Equine Summer Day Camp

Traveling through the scenic trails of the Huron National Forest is an outdoor treat! With the help of an NCMCF Community Impact Grant to Whispering Hope Ranch Ministries, 14 children from Ogemaw County were able to have that experience on horseback through the Ranch. NCMCF’s grant provided funds to support scholarships to help families with financial hardships afford the equine therapy-based day camp where children were able to ride the trails and utilize the indoor arena.

Project organizers say the children who attended shared how their experiences were “dynamite,” “so cool,” “awesome,” “epic,” and “amazing”!

There are many positive benefits associated with horse therapy, including improved balance, strength, range of motion, coordination/motor skills, faster reflexes, improved respiration/circulation, and sensory integration. In addition, by learning to care for the horse, children associate the care they provide with feelings, and an emotional bridge is constructed - a bond that can lead to improved social and communication skills.

Imagination Library Grant Gets Books into Kids’ Hands



Grayling Cooperative Preschool is working to ensure that literacy begins early! By partnering with the Great Start Readiness Program at Grayling Elementary School, the preschool serves as the local program for the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. Through this program, children receive an age-appropriate book in the mail each month from birth through age five.

A $2,000 NCMCF Community Impact Grant provided funds for the Imagination Library to continue for Crawford County children. Having already distributed more than 18,000 books locally, the program is provided at no cost to families. Project organizers say the NCMCF grant will also help the preschool to increase the number of children enrolled in the Imagination Library.

Giving Back and Honoring Those Who Serve
Gerald and Marlynne Crawford



Amid the tall pines and banks of the AuSable River, Gerald Crawford, or Gerry as he likes to be called, dedicates some of his energy to honoring the law enforcement and first responder community that has impacted his life in many ways. He is working to make a meaningful difference and creating a legacy for himself and his late wife, Marlynne. Through two funds established at the North Central Michigan Community Foundation, he is seeing their philanthropic efforts in action, and ensuring their favorite causes are cared for long into the future.

"Marlynne and I both had family and friends who retired from police service. We chose to leave our estate to support first responders who have needs that most people would not understand, and to support people who want to make police service their career," says Gerry, whose deep appreciation for emergency responders is rooted in the support they have provided to him.

Gerry spent his career leading information technology departments, while Marlynne, who passed away in January 2025, was a teacher in southeast Michigan. After retirement, they built a home in Luzerne, Michigan, and immediately got involved in their community. They volunteered at a nursing home and participated in local police memorials.

In 2019, Kirk Wakefield, Crawford County's long-time Sheriff, passed away unexpectedly shortly after retiring. Having recently become aware of the Community Foundation, Gerry saw the opportunity to memorialize their friend and childhood classmate, and give back financially and established the Sheriff Kirk Alan Wakefield Memorial Scholarship Fund.

"I thought this was a good way to encourage people to join law enforcement, building up some of the manpower locally," says Gerry. The fund provides scholarships to study Criminal Justice at Kirtland Community College or join the Kirtland Regional Police Academy.

In 2021, while caring for Marlynne, who was in the early stages of dementia, Gerry suffered a stroke. The first responders from Grayling not only helped him in an emergency; they became his support group, even doing his grocery shopping every couple of weeks. When he suffered another medical emergency, it was police officers who arrived to help him to the hospital.



Gerry donated a memorial plaque and flagpole for display in front of the Crawford County Sheriff's Office in Sheriff Wakefield's memory, and built the plaque's frame.

It wasn't long before Gerry recognized another need in his community and an opportunity to pay it forward: local officers needed more resources to help them better serve the community. So, he and Marlynne established the Friends of the Crawford County Sheriff's Office Fund to perpetually support the department's needs.

The Crawfords have arranged to have their estate support the two funds they established, making them members of the Community Foundation's Legacy Society.

"With both Marlynne and I having deep respect for first responders and law enforcement, leaving our estate to these two funds is a good fit," says Gerry. "The joy of giving isn't just in what we contribute—it's in knowing that we've helped create something that will last," says Gerry. "But this legacy is about more than financial support—it is about building a foundation of integrity, service, and a deep commitment to the well-being of our community. Each of us has the power to make a difference."



Knowledge Corner

Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCD) as a Smart Giving Tool

A Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) is a tax-advantaged way for individuals aged 70½ or older to donate directly from their Individual Retirement Account (IRA) to a qualified charity. By making a QCD, the distribution is excluded from taxable income, which can reduce overall tax liability.

In 2025, an individual can donate up to $108,000 from an IRA to a charity, including any fund at the Community Foundation. And it's a good idea to consider a QCD earlier in the year to allow your distribution to count toward your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD), which you must take once you turn 73.

In short, QCDs are a great tool for giving back to your community if you don't need the funds. To support an NCMCF fund, let your financial advisor know and get in touch!

2024 Annual Report Available Online

The 2024 North Central Michigan Community Foundation Annual Report can be viewed on our website at ncmcf.org under "Resources" and "Annual Reports"; or scan the QR code here to view it online.

Our Board of Directors

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NCMCF is an affiliate of the Community Foundation for Northeast Michigan.

CFNS ACCREDITED FOUNDATION

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