

The Griffin Family Legacy

Very few people can say their family's roots go back six generations in their community, but Nancy and Bob Griffin can. On both sides of the family, their ancestors' involvement in the West Branch area dates back to the 1800s. Today they run Griffin Beverage Company together, which first started serving northern Michigan in 1967. The company now has warehouses in West Branch, Alpena, Saginaw, St. Ignace (Mackinac County) and Marquette and distributes as far south as Lansing, north to the Upper Peninsula and stretches from the west to the east coast.



Nancy Griffin

However, the success of their business has not stopped them from being deeply involved in their hometown. Nancy serves on the Ogemaw County Committee for North Central Michigan Community Foundation and cannot say enough about the generosity of the people in her hometown. "Small communities are wonderful, fantastically supportive. Our community does whatever needs to be done," said Griffin as she listed off many examples.

She is particularly proud of the "wonderful fairgrounds and how the community pulled together to buy the land and make the Ogemaw County Fair one of the best in Michigan." She also notes the West Branch Wine and Art Walk, the Victorian Art Fair and how the community stepped up again to build the Downtown Victorian Park.

The Ogemaw County Genealogical and Historical Society's move to the Blumenthal House, which is a local historical land mark, is another major point of pride and example of what community volunteers can accomplish together. She commends the Historical Society Board, its members and dedicated volunteers for working tirelessly to restore and convert the 1908 multi-story home to a museum.

As a former biology teacher, her involvement in the high school she attended (then West Branch High School) and where her two children attended (Ogemaw Heights High School) and the Educational Support Partnership (ESP) is very important to her. ESP serves as an umbrella for 20 to 30 scholarships that help students from the West Branch and Rose City area attend colleges and universities throughout Michigan.



Blumenthal House, West Branch, Mich.

To commemorate West Branch High School, which merged with Rose City High School in 1968 to become Ogemaw Heights High School, she and a former class mate, Ron Schneider, helped create an endowment fund in 2006. With support from past graduates of West Branch High School, the endowment fund exceeded \$100,000 in 2015, quite an impressive accomplishment. The endowment and its annual scholarship awards are a wonderful way for people to remember their alma mater and pay it forward to future generations. To date, 31

scholarships for \$500 have been awarded. As the endowment fund continues to grow, forever, future generations will continue to benefit.

When asked what motivates Nancy to be so involved and generous with her time, talents and treasure, she recalls how her family has always been involved and giving. Her dad, a U.S. Veteran, was the Chief of the Fire Department for 40 years and also served as Mayor. Her grandmother, mother and Nancy have all volunteered for the Girl Scouts. "I'm just grateful for all the community has given me," says Nancy.

When approaching others to help support community causes, Nancy says she is "surprised by how many people say 'yes,' they just needed to be asked. The best way is to go out and talk to people, some people aren't interested at all, but others just don't know about the needs. It's so rewarding to get them inspired."

Nancy and her husband also have established the Bob and Nancy Griffin Donor Advised Fund, the Griffin Beverage Scholarship Fund, and the Esther and F.A. Diebold Memorial Endowment Fund in honor of Nancy's parents, which supports the West Branch Girl Scouts. To check out a full list of scholarship funds as part of the Educational Support Partnership, visit "Scholarships" and www.ncmcf.org.