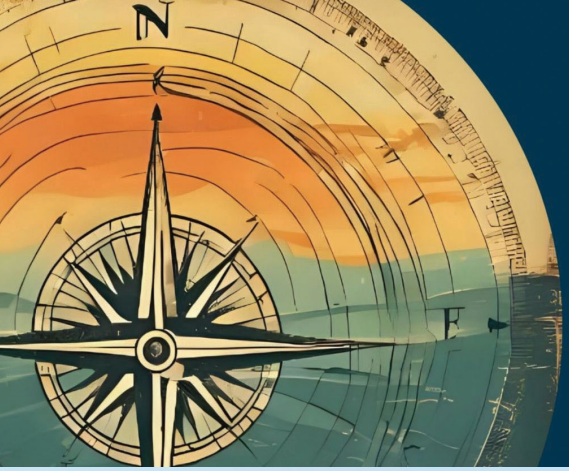


Community Foundation for
NORTHEAST MICHIGAN

Navigator

Spring 2026

CFNEM Introduces the Lake Huron Fund

A permanent endowment to protect our shared waters

Whether sparkling under the summer sun or frozen in the frigid winter temperatures, the beauty of our lakes, rivers and streams remind us how vital Lake Huron and its watershed are – not only to northeast Michigan, but to the entire Great Lakes region.

The Community Foundation for Northeast Michigan (CFNEM) established the Lake Huron Fund to support the health of Lake Huron, and in turn, the health of our communities. This permanently endowed fund will provide grants to nonprofit organizations for initiatives that aim to protect, preserve, and enhance Lake Huron's health throughout CFNEM and its Affiliate Foundation service areas.

The Foundation seeded the fund with $25,000. Donations will help fund stormwater management, native plant preservation, urban forestry planning, and invasive species removal across the Lake Huron shoreline and watershed that support our lake's vitality. And because the fund is endowed, it will support Lake Huron long into the future – for whatever unknown needs will come.

"Lake Huron is so much more than just a body of water. It provides drinking water for more than three million people, supports fisheries and water-based recreation, and is a key component of our regional economy," says CFNEM Executive Director Patrick Heraghty. "The Lake Huron Fund was created so the Foundation and our community can build a permanent resource to ensure that we can preserve, protect, and enhance our lake, and do our part in northeast Michigan to sustain this precious natural resource."

CFNEM's decision to create the Lake Huron Fund stemmed from the Foundation's involvement in the Lake Huron Forever initiative, launched in 2019. Heraghty has served on the binational steering committee, and CFNEM has been part of its planning, promotion, and granting. The establishment of the Lake Huron Fund was the Foundation's next step to align its commitment to the well-being of northeast Michigan's communities and the environment with strategic efforts to create a sustainable source of funding.

"We have been honored to play a role in protecting our shared waters of Lake Huron, and are encouraged by the number of communities, both in Michigan and Ontario, Canada, that have stepped up to take an active role in its protection," says Heraghty.

Every donation to the Lake Huron Fund gets this fun sticker! --->

Community Foundation for Northeast Michigan
Lake Huron Fund

Michigan Health Endowment Fund Partners with CFNEM
$150,000 Grant Supports Food Access Infrastructure



In January 2026, the Community Foundation received $150,000 from the Michigan Health Endowment Fund (MHEF) through its Food Access Rapid Response Fund.

Food banks, safety net organizations, and food pantries throughout the state, including Northeast Michigan, are experiencing an increase in demand for emergency food access. The MHEF partnered with community foundations to distribute the funds to community-based organizations that currently serve as critical food access points.

The entire $150,000 allotted to Northeast Michigan has been distributed to the nine counties in the CFNEM service area, as well as those served by its geographic affiliate foundations. Grants are being used to support these nonprofits in strengthening infrastructure, addressing communications strategies, improving food delivery systems, increasing staff capacity, expanding food rescue efforts, and upgrading systems and technology - all with the intention of assisting these organizations in addressing the increased need for services.

See the full list of organizations receiving funding through this grant at cfnem.org/about us/news.

"Rx Kids" Launches in Montmorency County
Community Foundation Serving as Fiduciary

RxKids®
A Prescription for Health, Hope, and Opportunity
Cash for Moms and Babies

Rx Kids is the nation's first-ever community-wide prenatal and infant cash prescription program. Beginning April 1, 2026 at 9:00 AM, families who reside in Montmorency County, can enroll to receive a one-time $1,500 payment during mid-pregnancy and $500 per month for the first six months of their baby's life. All expectant mothers must be at least 16 weeks pregnant at the time of enrollment or have an infant born on or after April 1, 2026. To learn more, please visit RxKids.org.

A public-private partnership, the initiative is made possible thanks to support from the State of Michigan and a three-year commitment from the Community Foundation for Northeast Michigan (CFNEM) through a $93,000 grant of unrestricted funds that specifically benefit Montmorency County.

Rx Kids delivers unconditional financial support for moms during pregnancy and during their infant's first six months of life, which is one of the most financially challenging and critical for child development. Originally launched in Flint in 2024, Rx Kids helps families afford essentials such as baby supplies, food, housing, childcare, and transportation to doctor's appointments. Early results from Rx Kids communities across Michigan show near-universal enrollment, improved family stability, reduced financial stress, and better health for moms and babies, while also generating local economic benefits as dollars flow directly into neighborhood businesses.

Rx Kids is led by Michigan State University and administered by GiveDirectly. Thunder Bay Community Health Service will serve as the Community Champion for Rx Kids in Montmorency County, supporting outreach, engagement, and celebration. CFNEM will serve as local fiduciary and welcomes contributions to ensure the sustainability of the program in Montmorency County.

-Lake Huron Fund, continued-

The Community Foundation is now in the process of creating the grantmaking framework for how funds will be distributed, with the first round of Lake Huron grants expected to be awarded this year.

CFNEM's Development and Marketing Director, Christine Hitch, says grants will support innovative conservation, stewardship, and educational projects and programs that fall within the Northeast Michigan portion of the Lake Huron shoreline and watershed.

"The reality is that our communities will always need to rely on Lake Huron as our most important natural resource, so it is incredibly important for the Community Foundation, and our entire region, to work together to protect our water," says Hitch. "We continue to learn how invasive species are impacting native species, fisheries are declining, and microplastics are in our water. We know people want to help, and it can be overwhelming to know how to make a difference. This is a place to start."

Hitch added that as the fund grows through gifts from the community and investment, more and larger projects will be able to be supported over time.

"Lake Huron gives us so much – beauty, life, and a sense of 'home'," she says. "Building the Lake Huron Fund at the Community Foundation will help us protect it forever, safeguarding this precious resource and securing our region's future."



Lake Huron and its watershed stretch across 51,000 square miles.

Why support the Lake Huron Fund?

Lake Huron is one of the world's greatest treasures—vast, beautiful, and vital to the people, wildlife, and communities that depend on it, including in Northeast Michigan. By giving to the Lake Huron Fund at the Community Foundation, **you are helping to protect lakes, rivers, and groundwater from pollution and overuse, safeguard wildlife habitats, and ensure this incredible natural resource remains healthy and vibrant for future generations.** Every drop matters—and so does every gift. Lake Huron gives us so much—let's give back.

Scan here to give online or visit cfnem.org.



Black Lake, Onaway, Michigan, Lake Huron Watershed

Featured Grants

Habitat for Humanity's New Homes Supported by CFNEM Grantmaking



In early October, Habitat for Humanity Northeast Michigan hosted an open house for three new Habitat homes. CFNEM staffers Jennifer Dingman and DeeAnn Karos stopped by to congratulate the new homeowners and see a little bit about how more than $23,000 in CFNEM grants have helped positively impact individuals.

"Each family can select the special touches on their new houses that will make it feel like a home," Jennifer shared. "From exterior siding, interior paint, flooring, bathroom fixtures and kitchen cabinetry, they get to choose. Our favorite was the young teenage boy who chose an exciting electric green paint for his brand-new space. You could see the highlight of the green as soon as you walked into the small hallway!"



From Vacant to Vibrant - Restoring a Piece of History

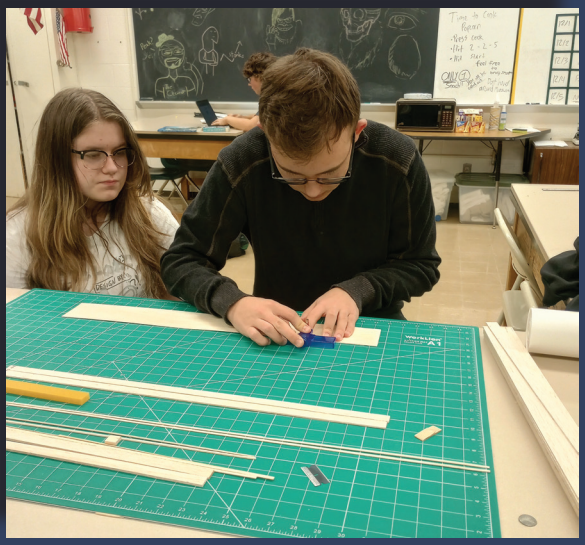
The revitalization of the train depot building in Harrisville continues, creating a growing sense of pride in this historic structure being restored by a committed group of volunteers. With the help of a CFNEM Community Impact Grant and other funders, the Friends of the Harrisville Train Depot was able to complete a roofing project – crucial for stabilization and rehabilitation of this long-vacant structure. The vision for this building is to transform it into a vibrant community hub to benefit families, students, seniors, and visitors with Michigan history education and cultural enrichment.

Little Learners Get Big Reading Moments at Home



PoWeR! Book Bags focuses on early-childhood literacy. With the help of a $4,000 grant from our Northeast Michigan Women's Giving Circle (WGC), this organization is putting more books into homes across Alpena, Montmorency, and Presque Isle Counties through the Little Learners program. Children light up when home visitors arrive with new stories, older siblings read to babies, and parents are spending more time reading together as a family.

This is the power of early literacy, and it is building connection, confidence, and a love of language right at home.

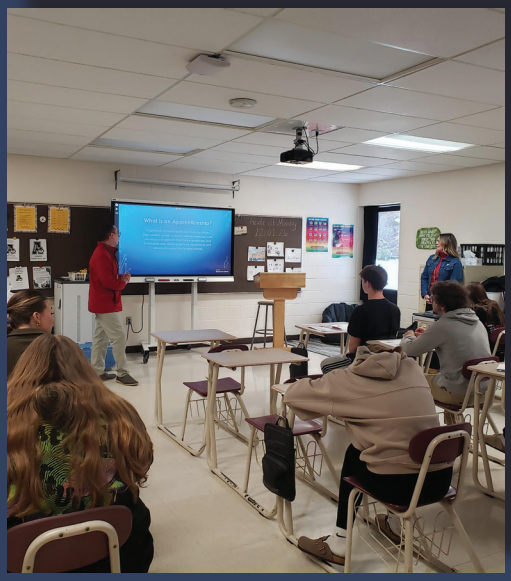


From Barriers to Breakthroughs

With the help of a grant from our Youth Advisory Council (YAC), Alpena Public Schools students now have the technology they need to fully participate in hands-on STEM competitions like Science Olympiad. With proper access to equipment, students went from a non-operating robot one year to a fully functioning robot competing at the state level the next year.

These tools help students build real-world STEM skills, strengthen college and scholarship applications, and prepare for future careers, whether college or trade based.

Young Women Explore Skilled Trades



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."

2025 Annual Reports Available Online

- Complete Financial Reporting
- Contributions
- Assets & Granting
- Community Impact
- Investment Rate of Return
- Youth Support & Scholarships

2025 Annual Reports for the Community Foundation for Northeast Michigan and our three affiliate foundations (Iosco County Community Foundation, North Central Michigan Community Foundation, and Straits Area Community Foundation) are available on our website at cfnem.org under "Resources" and "Publications"; or ***scan the QR code here to view them online***.

Winter 2026 Community Impact Grants

The Community Foundation for Northeast Michigan awarded a new round of Community Impact Grants in March 2026 covering Alcona, Alpena, Montmorency, and Presque Isle Counties. These grants support a broad range of interest areas including basic needs, human services, environmental programs, arts and humanities, and more.

Community Impact Grants

34 Grants

$95,680

Projects awarded full funding of $5,000 include:

- Alpena Senior Citizens Center, Inc. for a nutrition project centered around a new pathway garden.
- The Lincoln Pop-Up Pantry, a new nonprofit feeding Alcona County families.
- Posen Consolidated Schools for a research and stewardship trip for students and teachers to learn about plastic pollution in the Great Lakes.
- Presque Isle District Library for an arts celebration and appreciation project called "From the Blues to Shakespeare."
- St. John Lutheran School for an after-school care creativity-based project for students.
- Thunder Bay Transportation Authority to provide transportation for individuals attending medical and wellness appointments.

See the full list of Winter 2026 Community Impact Grants at cfnem.org. These grants come from CFNEM's Community Impact Fund, as well as several other funds established to enrich this grantmaking, including designated and field of interest funds, and **Funds for the Community.**

Designated & Field of Interest Funds

Alcona County General Fund
Alcona Healthcare Initiative Fund
Ann M. Kuntz Fund
Huron Shores Health Fund
United Communities of Presque Isle County Fund
Montmorency County General Fund
Wayne Wire Cloth Fund
Presque Isle General Fund
Mr. and Mrs. O.B. Eustis Memorial Fund
CFNEM Tobacco Fund
Marianne Kalivoda Hall Memorial Fund

Funds for the Community

James and Nancy Apsey Fund for the Community
Genite Family Fund
Chuck & Kathy Ingle Fund
Lappan Family Fund
Neva Nelson Memorial Fund
Panel Processing Endowment Fund
Lucas & Janet Pfeiffenberger Fund
Reitz Family Fund
Stevens Fund
Mr. & Mrs. Walter G. Weinkauf, Sr. Endowment Fund
Len and Janet Zolnierek Family Fund





Knowledge Corner

Charitable Tax Changes Effective in 2026

Some significant changes to charitable tax rules kicked off with the 2026 tax year. Here are a few good-to-know pointers as you consider this year's charitable giving.

- The **standard deduction is increasing** for 2026, which means itemized deductions will need to be higher for a taxpayer to be eligible to itemize on their tax return.
- Non-itemizers will be allowed to deduct charitable contributions (up to $1,000 for single / $2,000 for joint filers). That's a big change that delivers some tax benefits for charitable gifts.
- Though the tax rates remain the same, the income levels that define each tax bracket have shifted, making it a timely opportunity to discuss and consider tax-efficient charitable giving strategies.
- The per-taxpayer limit for Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs) is increasing, making this already tax-efficient method of giving even more beneficial to both the taxpayer and the benefiting charity.

We encourage you to contact your financial advisor or CPA for tax-related advice. For assistance with gift design and how you can connect your charitable giving to what you care about most, please contact CFNEM Development & Marketing Director, Christine Hitch at chitch@cfnem.org or 989-354-6881.

What are Funds for the Community?

These are endowed funds that complement and strengthen our Community Impact grantmaking. These funds generate annual grants that expand the Foundation's ability to serve the region and support giving with an awareness that the future holds more than we can imagine.

- *Funds for the Community* can be named to recognize those who feel a connection to the area and care about the future of Northeast Michigan.
- The minimum to start a *Fund for the Community* is $5,000.
- Donors can start a *Fund for the Community* at one time or grow the Fund to the minimum over three years.
- Dollars produced by *Funds for the Community* will increase grant money available from the Community Impact Fund for a greater investment in Northeast Michigan. Those grants are given to local nonprofits each year to make a difference close to home.
- *Funds for the Community* are eligible to receive Qualified Charitable Distributions from a donor's IRA.

To learn more or get started on establishing a *Fund for the Community*, contact us at 1-989-354-6881.



YAC Members Convene for Regional Service Learning

The Youth Advisory Councils, or YACs, from across Northeast Michigan convened in Alpena, Michigan on October 24 for a regional youth grantmakers conference hosted by the Community Foundation. Approximately 100 YAC members and their adult advisors gathered to collaborate and learn from each other as they prepared for a new year of grantmaking, leadership, community service, and philanthropic work.

YACs are entrusted with recommending grants each year from endowed funds held at the Community Foundation. These grants support each YAC's youth community by addressing pressing issues faced by their peers. Through this process, young people learn about the important role of giving and service, actively participating in work that helps their fellow youth. CFNEM received grant support for the conference from an Alpena Community College Foundation Granum Grant and from the Council of Michigan Foundations.

In March 2026, the Northeast Michigan Youth Advisory Council awarded more than $23,000 in grants to support youth programs in the region. View YAC grants at cfnem.org.

Community Foundation for
NORTHEAST MICHIGAN
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