

Iosco County Community Foundation Update

Spring 2026

Students Learn by Raising Lake Sturgeon through Grant

Students at Whittemore-Prescott Elementary School had the opportunity to raise lake sturgeon in their classroom, learn the science behind their growth and importance to the ecosystems in which they live, and witness their release into the natural environment. An Iosco County Community Foundation grant helped the school purchase the fish, aquarium, and other supplies to make this project come to life for students to enjoy for many years.



Pictured left to right: ICCF Board members Liam Strauer, Nina O'Loughlin, Kayla Raushi, Kelly Alexander, and Timothy Haskin.

In March 2026, the ICCF Board had a chance to visit Kelli Rau's classroom to see the grant in action and hear about the excitement of the students and the learning taking place.

"Bringing this project to Whittemore-Prescott Elementary School has been amazing for staff and students alike. The students have gained tremendous leadership and conservation skills," Rau shared. "They have learned the definition of conservation and have been working hard to share the message with everyone in the community about the Lake Sturgeon population. The whole school has been engaged with tracking the growth of the sturgeon and learning about their habitats and lifecycle."

Introducing the Lake Huron Fund
An 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 reminds us how vital Lake Huron and its watershed are – not only to northeast Michigan, but to the entire Great Lakes region.

Our lead foundation, 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, including those in Iosco County. This permanently endowed fund will provide grants to nonprofit organizations for initiatives that aim to protect, preserve, and enhance Lake Huron's health throughout its entire service area. As an affiliate of CFNEM, the nonprofits and communities of Iosco County will benefit. - *Story continues on page 2*

Lake Huron Fund, continued



Donations will help fund projects addressing 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 may come.

"Iosco County's entire east side is outlined by the lake, and the health of the AuSable River and many other streams and small lakes within the county all impact Lake Huron's health," says CFNEM Executive Director Patrick Heraghty. "It 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. The Lake Huron Fund was created so that, together, we can do our part to sustain this precious natural resource."

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."



Lake Huron shoreline, Oscoda

Iosco County YAC Grants Help Young People Thrive



Our Youth Advisory Council (YAC) awarded a total of $11,685 to area nonprofits for programs and projects that benefit young people in our communities.

The Iosco County YAC is a group of young people aged 12 to 21 from Iosco County. Working with adult advisors, these youth work to improve the lives of others in the community through the allocation of grant money. With initial funding support by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, YAC teaches young people the importance of philanthropy through community service, leadership and grantmaking.

Grants awarded in March 2026:

- $1,000 to Cheboygan-Otsego-Presque Isle Counties Great Start Collaborative for their Summer STEM Middle School Career Exploration Camps to be held in Iosco County.
- $2,073 to Develop Iosco for their Play Therapy Learning and Impact program.
- $1,500 to Hale Area Schools for their Sensory Room Improvements and Hale Area Schools Robotics projects.
- $1,612 to Iosco County Coats for Kids for their “Warm from Head to Toe” project.
- $1,000 to Little Calvins Voice for their Autism Communication Board project.
- $1,500 to Max-Well Therapy Center for their “Sponsorship for Riders” project.
- $1,500 to Palomino Hope Equine Experience for their “Removing Barriers to Participation: Boots for At-Risk Youth” project.
- $1,000 to Tawas Wellness Warriors for the “Teens THRIVE” project at The Collective.
- $500 to Plainfield Township for a remodeling project at the museum in Hale.

Our Board of Directors

Kelly Alexander
Mark Fore
Timothy Haskin
Andrew Johnson
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2025 Annual Report

The 2025 Iosco County Community Foundation Annual Report can be viewed on our website at iccf-online.org under “Resources” and “Annual Reports”; or scan the QR code here to view it online.

2025 by the Numbers

Total Assets
$9,082,073

Total Contributions
$571,244

Total Grants
$254,341

Community Improvement Grants
$20,500

Youth Advisory Council Grants
$16,000

Scholarships
$165,698 (45 recipients)

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

CFNS
ACCREDITED FOUNDATION

Thank You

Your gifts make a difference in our communities, and we are honored to be a trusted partner in your giving. The donors listed here gave to the Iosco County Community Foundation during the 2025 calendar year.

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James and Kathe Kirchner
Steve Wilson's son



Grant Highlights



Creating Recreational Opporunities for All

The Iosco Exploration Trail (IET) has put a lot of time and effort into making Iosco County trails useable and beautiful for all to enjoy while walking, hiking, and biking. A recent $4,000 ICCF Community Improvement Grant provided funds to help IET purchase maintenance equipment to keep the trails in top shape and accessible throughout the year. The trail, which is part of Michigan's Iron Belle Trail, provides a great opportunity for residents and visitors to get outside and enjoy our county's fresh air and beautiful scenery. The trail connects communities throughout Iosco County with opportunities for walking, biking, and birding, opening up access to natural spaces.

Supporting Children in the Toughest of Times

Sometimes, modest grants can have a significant impact on those served by the funded project. That is certainly the case with a grant to Friends Together from the Iosco County Youth Advisory Council (YAC). The $368 grant helped Friends Together, which serves cancer patients and their families, to purchase books specifically meant to help Iosco County children through grief and loss. The books are given to children who experience the loss of a loved one, and help them to understand their grief and encourage them to share their feelings. The books also include tips for parents and guardians to help their child process the experience. *Pictured right: Friends Together Program Coordinator Malinda Amlotte shows one of the books purchased with the grant.*





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 Development & Marketing Director, Christine Hitch at chitch@cfnem.org or 989-354-6881.

IOSCO COUNTY
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
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Building Community Through Art

A beautiful new mural at Oscoda Beach Park now welcomes visitors with bright colors and a sense of community spirit. An Iosco County Community Foundation grant to Develop Iosco provided materials and artist fees so a previous crumbling mural could be renovated into an updated piece of beautiful public art. The project included many volunteers – children and adults – who worked with muralist Jamie Merdzinski to create this colorful display.