

**Giving Indiana Funds for Tomorrow Initiative
Strengthens Leadership and Addresses
Communities' Most Pressing Needs**

GIFT VII





Traditionally, we've played a supporting role in community issues, but GIFT VII was the catalyst we needed to step into a leadership role that was desperately needed.

— Clayton Boyles, executive director of the Dubois County Community Foundation.

In 2020, the community foundation in south central Indiana was one of 11 foundations in the state to receive a large-scale leadership grant through the competitive component of the seventh phase of Lilly Endowment's Giving Indiana Funds for Tomorrow (GIFT) initiative.

Through its GIFT initiative, the Endowment has encouraged Indiana community foundations to seek input broadly from the residents in their communities to identify and prioritize compelling needs and opportunities and then to work with community stakeholders to develop and fund strategies to address those needs and opportunities.

Through the seventh phase of the initiative—GIFT VII—the Endowment provided \$125.6 million in grants to help build upon the momentum and successes community foundations achieved in the initiative's earlier phases. GIFT VII provided multiple funding opportunities, including planning grants, matching fund grants, board engagement grants, community leadership grants and large-scale leadership grants. GIFT VII, which began in 2018 and wrapped up in 2020, was designed to help community foundations strengthen their leadership competencies and their financial conditions.

GIFT VII planning grants totaling \$5.6 million helped foundations to connect with and convene broad cross sections of their communities to research, identify and better understand the highest priority challenges and opportunities affecting residents. "The planning grant was an important piece of the exploration process," says Clayton Boyles, executive director of the Dubois County Community Foundation (below). "We thought we were going in one direction, but our research took us in another. It was a pivotal part of the learning process, giving us time and resources to gain more understanding that helped us make better informed decisions."

Dubois County in southern Indiana, like many other communities across the state, is feeling the impact of substance abuse and addiction and unaddressed mental health issues.

● The Community Foundation of St. Joseph County is using a GIFT VII grant to strengthen its 21st Century Scholars initiative, which supports students like Quentez Columbus (opposite— with school counselor Gaye Johnson), who are working to reach their higher education goals.



AT A GLANCE

Lilly Endowment created GIFT in 1990 to help local communities in Indiana develop the philanthropic capacity to identify and address local needs and challenges. When GIFT began, there were about a dozen Indiana community foundations. Today, there are 94 community foundations and affiliate funds making grants to support local charitable organizations in all of Indiana's 92 counties. The combined community foundation assets have grown from \$100 million in 1990 to \$4 billion at the end of 2019 (\$3.2 billion for those foundations that have regularly participated in GIFT).

“Lilly Endowment charged us with addressing a complex, deep issue affecting our community,” Boyles says. “The breadth and depth of the challenge of substance abuse are evident in the ripple effect it has on our community.”

Employers are facing workforce shortages. Child protective services is seeing an increase in caseloads. The criminal justice system is struggling with repeat offenders who are not receiving behavioral health treatment. As a result, overall quality of life in the county is diminished, according to Boyles.

Following the GIFT VII planning period, foundations were invited to apply for a second round of funding to help them play a leading role in addressing the priorities they identified through the planning grant process. Through the process of applying for a planning grant and a

leadership grant, the Community Foundation of St. Joseph County in northern Indiana was able to better understand the county’s high rates of generational poverty and below-average median household income. As a recipient of a large-scale leadership grant, the foundation received \$4 million to support the creation and implementation of the 21st Century Scholar Success Initiative.

● Shala George (with high school counselor Kristin Gaines) is preparing to enroll at Indiana University with the support of its 21st Century Scholars initiative in St. Joseph County. ● Students Cesar Cervera, Kylie Kruger (with advisor Kathy Miller), Forest Wallace and Quentez Columbus are 21st Century Scholars taking part in St. Joseph County programs to help them achieve higher education success (next page).





Through the initiative, St. Joseph County leaders are working to double the number of local 8th grade students enrolled in the 21st Century Scholars program, a statewide effort to help ensure that every Hoosier student can access a college education. With its new initiative, the community foundation will provide mentoring and other support to help students complete college and launch promising careers. The foundation is partnering with leaders in K-12 education, higher education, economic development and social services to design and implement the initiative.

“We know that improving educational attainment is the only reliable path out of poverty,” said Rose Meissner (above), president of the Community Foundation of St. Joseph County. “Every additional level of education correlates to higher income and more secure employment. And so many causes our community cares about correlate with higher income, including better health outcomes, more active civic engagement, improved parenting, reduced incarceration and higher rates of home ownership.”

Under round two of GIFT VII, the Endowment made grants totaling \$11.25 million to 85 community foundations serving 89 Indiana counties. The grants are funding a wide range of priorities, from improving educational attainment to strengthening economic and workforce development efforts, transportation plans and health outcomes.

A third round of grants was competitive. The Endowment encouraged foundations to consider what kind of large-scale leadership projects could make a significant difference in their communities. The Endowment made 11 grants in this round totaling \$33.5 million to address a variety of priorities, including heritage preservation and revitalization efforts, mental health and addiction recovery needs, affordable housing and workforce development, among others.

In connection with its large-scale leadership grant, Dubois County Community Foundation has developed a broad coalition of 40 community members and stakeholders committed to improving access to services that address mental health needs and substance abuse disorders.

“Our vision is a community with effective resources to holistically rehabilitate and provide treatment and support to those in need of behavioral health services. Our hope is that anyone in our community can access services that address mental health and substance abuse disorders if and when they want help,” Boyles says. “We also hope that Dubois County can be a leader in our region to help improve access in our neighboring counties.”

