

**For Immediate Release**

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**Community Foundation Grant Helps Support Innovative Food Industry**

The Board of the Grand Haven Area Community Foundation (GHACF) is pleased to announce eight third-round Community Impact grant awards, totaling \$204,720, in support of Northwest Ottawa County and our surrounding communities. This includes a \$75,000 grant to Muskegon Area First for the West Michigan Food Processing Association's (WMFPA) FutureFood21 program: "Healthy Food & Sustainability through Increased Education."

"Muskegon Area First and WMFPA were developed at the request of the food industry, and regional economic development and educational partners," said Marty Gerencer, Executive Director of WMFPA. "A key focus is to develop and catapult the food industry into 21st Century FutureFood formulations and technologies providing our area youth with a pathway to sustainable livelihoods."

Ottawa County serves as the third highest agricultural county in the state, producing \$534 million in agricultural products, from 170,000 acres, annually. The FutureFood21 Program of WMFPA is a collaborative effort including Muskegon Community College and Michigan State University Institute of Agricultural Technology, and features hands-on training at the Food, Agriculture, Research, and Manufacturing (FARM) facility in Muskegon. It will boost educational and economic growth by providing the current and future labor force with livable wage livelihoods and career pathways through the provision of the skills necessary to meet and

exceed food safety standards, new COVID protocols, and the latest product innovations that are both healthy and sustainable.

“We are pleased to see how the WMFPA has progressed in 2020, especially in the midst of this unprecedented year,” said Katie Hensley, WMFPA Board of Directors Chairperson. “This Community Impact grant award will provide WMFPA support to expand its reach and impact with more students and communities.”

The GHACF currently has dual grant programs: Community Impact grants, which are featured here, and grants from the Community Relief & Recovery Fund, which respond to the current and long-term impact of COVID-19 on our community.

Additional Community Impact grants include:

**Catchafire via Fremont Area Community Foundation** — up to \$20,000 for “West Michigan Cohort of the One Michigan Capacity Building Program with Catchafire.” In this pilot year, Catchafire will provide some nonprofits in West Michigan with access to an innovative capacity building solutions that empower them to address operational, strategic, tactical and professional development needs as and when they arise. The GHACF is one of several community foundations supporting this program.

**Greater Ottawa County United Way** — \$20,000 for “2021 Community Assessment,” which is designed to identify pressing and prevalent issues within the health and human services in Ottawa County. The report is published every three years, is used by a wide spectrum of community leaders and organizations, and provides benchmarks to gauge progress and foster community engagement around meeting the community’s needs.

**Hope Network Michigan Education Corps** — \$10,000 to support the Michigan Education Corps K-3 Reading Corps program at Griffin Elementary School for the 2020– 2021 academic year. The K-3 Reading Corp program is a proven literacy intervention designed to support

students ability to read at grade level. The program will provide 20 minutes of individualized literacy interventions throughout the semester.

**IKUS Life Enrichment Services**— \$19,720 for “Client Privacy and Operations Efficiency” to support transitioning the organization’s IT system to a more secure, robust, and cost-effective client records platform. The transition will ultimately support the privacy of clients’ information and create efficiency between providers, including the State of Michigan.

**Ottawa County Parks Foundation** — \$50,000 for “Grand River Greenway,” which connects Lake Michigan to Grand Rapids with a multi-use water and land trail along the Grand River. This grant will contribute to the land acquisition, trail design, and construction for a 9-mile stretch of the Idema Explorers Trail from Riverside County Park through the Bass River State Recreation Area to Eastmanville Bayou County Park.

**West Michigan Environmental Action Council Education Foundation** — \$10,000 for “West Michigan Lakeshore Environmental Action and Advocacy” to increase public education and environmental awareness along the lakeshore to ultimately contribute to a more resilient West Michigan region.

The next grant deadline is March 31, 2021. Letters of Inquiry are due February 17, 2021.

#### ABOUT THE GHACF

The Grand Haven Area Community Foundation is a public, charitable organization serving the Northwest Ottawa County community since 1971. GHACF is regularly recognized as a top 100 Community Foundation in the nation and is the 8th largest community foundation in the State of Michigan. It encourages philanthropy by individuals, families, corporations, and organizations, and serves as a steward of their charitable funds and legacies. In addition to awarding grants, the Foundation offers technical support to nonprofits, convenes community leaders on issues of importance, and advocates for the nonprofit sector. For more information visit [ghacf.org](http://ghacf.org).

Attached: AerialViewofFARM.jpg, Marty Gerencer Photo2020.jpg