

LOCAL PHILANTHROPY CELEBRATED ON NOVEMBER 15

Today is National Philanthropy Day, and three Monroe County organizations are leading the local effort to celebrate the proud tradition of giving in our community and thank all those who have given in the past.

The Community Foundation of Bloomington and Monroe County, United Way of Monroe County, and the Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce are partnering to highlight the positive impact of local giving. The City of Bloomington has joined these organizations in championing philanthropy by designating November as “Be United Bloomington” in honor of the many ways our community works together to accomplish important goals.

“Philanthropy simply means voluntary giving for the common good,” explains Shari Woodbury, President of the Community Foundation of Bloomington and Monroe County. “Philanthropy connects you with the community’s future and is a way to leave your unique legacy.”

“On National Philanthropy Day, we recognize all those who contribute their time, resources, and talents to strengthening our community. These valuable donations allow us address the critical needs faced by local residents now and help us work to reduce those needs in the future. There are many opportunities to help sustain and enhance our community, both during the holidays and throughout the year,” according to Barry Lessow, Executive Director of United Way of Monroe County.

“When thanking our local philanthropists, it is important to remember that while there are countless individuals giving selfishly of themselves to help others, there are also countless businesses and organizations doing the same,” notes Christy Steele, President and CEO of the Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce. “The philanthropy generated by our business community is substantial and reinforces our belief that better business leads to a better community.”

Several local people reflect on their experiences of giving back to the community. As a child, Kevin Osborne made it a habit to put change in the Salvation Army kettles and still believes that this small gesture really helps to brighten someone's holiday. And with his wife Angie, Kevin is passing on the spirit of giving to their two daughters, Jessica and Jayna. Each month the Osborne family contributes either time or money through their church's mission work to agencies such as Habitat for Humanity and the Crop Walk.

Kevin also gets to show support for area non-profits through his work with the Indiana University Credit Union. In his current position, he is able to help make decisions about where local sponsorship dollars can have the greatest impact. When Kevin, who is also this year's United Way campaign co-chair, hears success stories from local agencies, "it makes me feel my small donation, when added together with others, can really make a difference. It's uplifting."

Kevin's employer is not unusual in its community support. In our area, many businesses, from small shops to large international corporations, give in support of local needs. A 2002 Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce survey found that 88% of members made donations for the community. "Companies also help by encouraging their employees to serve as board members and volunteers, and by donating in-kind goods and services," says Christy Steele, President of the Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce. "Investing in the community is good for everyone."

Giving patterns reflect the unique interests of each individual or organization. The William Cutshall Memorial Endowment Fund illustrates how someone can make their philanthropy personal. Bill Cutshall, a fourth-generation doctor and a family man, was a urologist in private practice and was involved in Cook Family Health Center, Cook Biotech, and Hospice of Bloomington. Bill volunteered in countries like Haiti and China, sharing his medical skills and his compassion with those in need. After he passed away last December, family members established an endowment in his honor—he was a giving person, and in a way, this will allow him to keep on giving.

Dr. Cutshall had a special interest in law enforcement. He practiced medicine in the ER, worked as the deputy coroner, and had many friends on the police force. So the William Cutshall Memorial Fund was set up at the Community Foundation to support training and safety needs for local law enforcement. Grants will help people like Dr. Cutshall's friends on the force to do their jobs safely and better. Family and friends have found memorial gifts to the endowment a meaningful way of paying tribute to Bill Cutshall.

Many people not only give to worthy causes during their lifetimes, but also arrange in their wills for their support to continue after them. That's what Stuart "Torchy" and Anna Holmquest did. These IU graduates retired to Bloomington after Torchy's successful career in a Fortune 500 company, Brockley Glass. Bequests awarded from their estate this year represent a broad range of involvements and interests, supporting endowed chairs and scholarship programs at Indiana University, health organizations like Bloomington Hospital and Shriner's Hospital, their Methodist church, and several other local non-profits. Among these gifts was half a million given to the P. Stuart and Anna L. Holmquest Fund at the Community Foundation, which makes grants to support innovative programs for children in Monroe County. The Holmquests' generosity will continue to enrich our community, and support the positive development of children and students here, for many years to come.

But it doesn't take a huge donation to make a big impact. Each week on their trip to the grocery store, Mike and his wife, Liny, spend an extra \$5-7 to help stock a local food pantry. By purchasing items that are on sale and also on the Monroe County United Ministries wish list, they are able to make a meaningful contribution to those in need. When their weekly extras add up to a couple full bags of food, they deliver them to MCUM, a United Way partner agency. Mike says they enjoy shopping for the food pantry and by donating weekly in small amounts, "you don't miss it out of your pocketbook."

One of Mike's first memories of donating was giving blood as a Marine in the Vietnam War – he saw a need and wanted to respond to it. That philosophy is still evident today and is why he and Liny focus so much on collecting food. They see many people in our community struggling and in need of some extra help. They each volunteer for local agencies and help out with projects whenever they can. He believes that “saving the world starts in your own backyard” and is doing just that by continually donating food and his time to the local community.

According to Woodbury, “Although philanthropy is often perceived as only very large donations, the real meaning is much broader and encompasses donations of any size. When we each donate within our capacity, we enrich our community and strengthen human welfare.”

Monroe County's National Philanthropy Day is a combined effort of the Community Foundation of Bloomington and Monroe County (www.communityfoundation.ws), United Way of Monroe County (www.monroeunitedway.org), and the Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce (www.chamberbloomington.org). It was first celebrated in 1986, when President Ronald Reagan signed a proclamation recognizing November 15 as National Philanthropy Day.

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