

# PATHWAYS

Newsletter

Reflecting on the Impact Our  
Partnerships Are Making

[WWW.SMYTHCCF.ORG](http://WWW.SMYTHCCF.ORG)



January 2024



**Welcome to our first newsletter!**

With a full year behind us as a dual entity, we are pleased to provide a review of our projects and progress for 2023. First, a brief look at how we got here. In 1998 a group of forward-thinking residents of Smyth County established the Smyth County Community Foundation (SCCF), with the goal of promoting the health of county residents and supporting our main health care provider, Smyth County Community Hospital. Since then, a number of changes in ownership of the hospital and a broadening of the Foundation's mission have taken place. The major change came in late 2021 when Ballad Health purchased the Foundation's remaining shares in the hospital, resulting in an infusion of funds for the SCCF.

The Foundation's Board of Directors took this opportunity to redefine and refine the organization and its mission. They decided to create two entities under one umbrella, establishing the Charitable Fund and re-purposing the Community Foundation. In January 2023, board member Lynda Helton took the helm as the Executive Director with the help of Kevin Vernon, the CFO.

Today, both entities are devoted to the health, wellness, and education of all residents of Smyth County, while fostering the spirit of giving within our community. The Charitable Fund has a capital account and uses the investment proceeds to finance grants to non-profits in Smyth County. The Community Foundation has a new focus: helping residents create scholarships or endowments to fund programs of their choosing.

Both the Charitable Fund and Community Foundation are now going strong and growing. Our fourteen-member Board of Directors remains closely involved, under the direction of Chairperson, Mike Robinson. We are fortunate to have Mike at the helm, bringing his educational experience and knowledge as the former superintendent of the Smyth County Schools, and current Director of the A. Linwood Holton Governor's School.

We've spent the past year fine-tuning our procedures and building relationships. Through our Charitable Fund we awarded fifteen grants. Our Community Foundation has helped create four scholarships that are now benefiting Smyth County residents. *Let's take a closer look.*

# Smyth County Charitable Fund

2023 was a banner year for providing financial support to organizations and non-profit groups through Smyth County Charitable Fund (FUND). We awarded a total of \$830,325.00 to our 2023 recipients. These recipients include the towns of Marion and Chilhowie, and the Bland Ministry Center's Dental Services Program for students at Smyth Head Start Centers.

Other initiatives included the Appalachian Highlands Community Dental Center Expansion Project, an Emory and Henry Doctoral Capstone Project, The Appalachian Center for Hope, and the Mel Leaman Free Clinic. Susan MacNeil Ferraro, Executive Director of the Mel Leaman Clinic, summed up the importance of the Fund's support. "Without the grant from the Foundation we would not have a dental program. All the funds we receive from the

Foundation are used for supplies, equipment, and everything we need for our dental services. Dental equipment is much more expensive than medical, and the funding we receive from the Foundation is vital to us," Susan states.

Another 2023 grant was awarded to the Blue Ridge Discovery Center (BRDC). The center promotes awareness of our natural environment and teaches children and adults about the preservation of our Blue Ridge ecosystem. The grant represented a partnership between the BRDC, Smyth County Public Schools and the Fund in support of education. Lisa Benish, Executive Director of the BRDC explains, "The grant funded a program to bring fourth through twelfth grade teachers to the BRDC to introduce them to the center and what we do. Over fifty teachers spent the day here and we all benefited from the chance to connect personally, establish trust and build confidence so teachers feel comfortable bringing their students to the BRDC. We are glad to have such strong support from the Foundation."

## On The Horizon...

Our newest initiative, **Aging in Community in Smyth County**, will focus on the continuum of care for our elderly residents, so they may remain in Smyth County, near family and friends. This is a community-wide effort that is in its formative stage. We plan to pursue this initiative in 2024 and beyond.



Lifetime Wellness Center's LiveWell program is a 12-week group exercise, health and weight loss program. Here participants are shown doing circuit training.

Smyth County Chamber of Giving, Inc., the First United Methodist Church Food Pantry, Ebenezer Lutheran Church Micah's Backpack Program, Smyth Promise Scholarship, Smyth County Health Trust Scholarship, and Communities in Schools of Smyth County are also beneficiaries of the Foundation grants for 2023.

The grant application, process and due dates are fully detailed on our website, [smythccf.org](http://smythccf.org). *All applications are equally considered, regardless of the amount of the request.*

In addition to these grants, the Charitable Fund owns and provides ongoing support to the Holston Hills Golf Course and the Lifetime Wellness Centers in Marion and Saltville. Our commitment to these properties assures that they are well maintained and accessible to all our residents.

## A Note From Our Board Chair



2023 was a year of change and progress for the Smyth County Community Foundation. Our first full year of being a vehicle in our community for philanthropy in addition to our grant making endeavors. Through the guidance and leadership of Lynda Helton, our executive director, we partnered with local organizations and individuals to establish four new endowments. These endowments have paved the way for every Smyth County high school graduate to be able to have their first two years of college paid for at one of our local community colleges, a golf scholarship, an education scholarship, and a half million dollar endowment to provide scholarship support for growing our own healthcare workers.

I am so proud of the work being done. The foundation desires to be a catalyst for impactful change in our community through growing philanthropy, supporting causes that improve the health of our citizens, and working together to create opportunities and give hope. If you are considering a way to leave a legacy and making an impact on Smyth County for generations to come please call Lynda and discuss how the Smyth County Community Foundation might be able to help.

Mike Robinson  
Board Chair

## Our Board

The following are members of both the Smyth County Community Foundation Board and the Smyth County Charitable Fund Board.

- **Mike Robinson, PhD – Chair**
- **Paul Holcombe, Esq. – V. Chair**
- **Sandra Catalan – Sec/Treas**
- **Emily Bralley, DO**
- **Dennis Carter, EdD**
- **Brian Cregger**
- **David Fields**
- **Sarah Gillespie**
- **John Graham, Esq.**
- **Chelsea Hamman, MD**
- **Dickie Kegley**
- **David Kiser, MD**
- **Brian Thompson, DMD**
- **Merrelle Ward**

## Community Impact Award



Gary and Marilyn Peacock received the 2023 **Community Impact Award** for their leadership in establishing and funding the Changing Lives through Healthcare Scholarship. This scholarship will impact many lives in Smyth County by paving the way for more healthcare services provided in Smyth County.

## Fun Fact ...



Smyth County Community Foundation and Smyth County Charitable Fund have a new Facebook page. Follow us to keep up with all the activities of the Foundation.

# Spotlight on Community Foundation Scholarships

The new purpose of the Community Foundation is to foster giving by encouraging individuals and groups to donate funds for endowments or scholarships. SCCF has established procedures for donors to set up endowment funds to be used as directed by the donor. The intent is to streamline the process so it is direct and simple for donors to leave a legacy with the help of SCCF.

## Trailblazer Award



Marvin Leslie, shown here presenting a golf scholarship to one of the 2023 award recipients, was awarded the 2023 Trailblazer Award. Mr. Leslie was our first community donor and led the way for creating endowments to forever give back to our community.

agreed.” John and his family wanted to honor the legacy of giving that Judy embodied. He says, “After she passed I found a lot of notes from people that she had helped, at the Job Corps and the Literacy program. That inspired us to help others with a scholarship.”

John is grateful for the guidance he received from Lynda and the Foundation. “I doubt I could have done it all on my own,” he states. “They handle all the administrative work. We expect to award a scholarship in 2024, and over time, we hope to increase what we can give back to our community. Judy always put her students first.”

A perfect example of this is the **Louise Blevins-Leslie Girls Golf Scholarship** established in 2023 by Marvin Leslie. Louise was an avid golfer and enjoyed playing at Holston Hills Golf Course, and other courses, with her husband, Marvin. He found the ideal way to honor her memory with the help and support of SCCF. “Smyth County Community Foundation made it easy for me to set up a girl’s golf scholarship in memory of my wife,” Mr. Leslie states. “I don’t know how I would have accomplished all this without them.” Six high school girls in Smyth County received scholarships in 2023. The legacy Mr. Leslie created will provide financial support to young golfers for years to come.

We are pleased to be working with the Tamingers family to establish the **Judy Tamingers Scholarship Fund** for Smyth County residents who are pursuing a degree in education. A long-time Marion resident, Judy is universally remembered for her generosity, loving spirit, and her devotion to helping others in her community.

John Tamingers, Judy’s husband for sixty years, recalls learning about the SCCF Legacy program. “I heard Lynda Helton give a presentation at the VFW and that gave me the idea for the scholarship. I talked with my children about it, and they



John Tamingers, and the Tamingers family, were recognized for their commitment to education as they support our students training to be teachers.

SCCF has a longstanding partnership with Ballad Health and the Smyth County Community Hospital Health Trust. Now, we are jointly offering a scholarship to assist Smyth County residents who want to work in clinical healthcare. The **Changing Lives Through Healthcare Scholarship** is intended to help fill the tremendous need for nurses, medical technicians, dental hygienists and therapists in our area. The goal of the Trust is to raise one million dollars for the fund, according to Gary Peacock, Chair of the Health Trust. He explains, "The Health Trust is not big enough to accomplish this on our own. We reached out to partner with SCCF, and we've been working on this for about two years. The Health Trust focuses on seeking donations, while the SCCF has the infrastructure to manage the funds." It's a successful partnership. The Charitable Fund pledged to match \$250,000 in funds raised, and the Health Trust has reached this milestone. Their "Big Night Under the Big Top Gala" fundraiser, held in September, was a big success, raising over \$50,000, their highest total ever. The Changing Lives Through Healthcare Scholarship Fund expects to start awarding scholarships in spring 2024.

Other efforts supported by SCCF include the Smyth Promise Scholarship, a partnership with Smyth County Board of Supervisors. It is open to all Smyth County high school graduates so they may attend community college and covers tuition and fees.

In 2024, we plan to raise awareness of the possibilities available to our community through the Community Foundation.



The Smyth County Community Hospital Health Trust Board was recognized for their dedication and partnership to address healthcare staffing needs in Smyth County by creating the Changing Lives Through Healthcare Scholarship endowment. Pictured (L-R): Amanda Ward, Jack Simpson, Mike Sturgill, Dale Clark, Marilynn Peacock, Gary Peacock, Phillip Davis, Connie McKeel, Sandy Gray, Teresa Ratliff and Kimberly Williams. Not pictured: Valerie Armbrister, Paul Grinstead, Bill Jennings, El Saunders and Bob Watkins.

# The Best Is Yet To Come ...

The completion of our first year as the Charitable Fund and Community Foundation feels like a milestone. We have laid the groundwork for the creation of funds and endowments and have four scholarships in place to help students pursue education, healthcare and wellness.

Our grants are making a significant impact on the lives of our residents and the organizations in our community. As our website states, **"We are on a Mission to partner to build pathways for a stronger community by creating opportunities and giving hope for a brighter future.** Our Shared Purpose is to build a community where all people can lead healthy, successful lives and are *inspired to help one another.*"

We feel that we are well positioned to continue our work in 2024. We plan to enhance the services we currently have in place, and to expand our reach in support of additional community efforts. As we raise awareness of our efforts, we continue to promote creative ways for community members to donate to SCCF. For example, we are grateful to the Peacock family for their donation of real property in late 2023. The proceeds of the sale of this property will directly benefit the Changing Lives Through Healthcare Scholarship, our joint effort with the Smyth County Community Hospital Health Trust.

We are extremely grateful for all our donors. We need you and appreciate you. Thank you. We hope this review of our activities for 2023 and expectations for 2024 is helpful to you, and inspires you to help us

*foster the giving spirit in  
Smyth County!*

## Contact Us

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## Director's Corner

I have lived in Smyth County my whole life and this area of Virginia is one of the best places to call home. Over the course of 2023, I have learned of great things going on in our community and areas of great need. You have welcomed me with open arms as I shared our new endeavor in community sponsored scholarship and grant-making endowments.



I knew in my heart that Smyth County was full of generous, loving people who are inspired to help one another. We are seeing that play out as we established our first four scholarships.

We have partnered with our local government, another non-profit and citizens of Smyth County. "Blessed" is the word that best describes how I feel as I reflect on our good work in the community in 2023. I am eager to build more partnerships in 2024 to make a huge impact in Smyth County.

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