



COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Great Communities Don't Happen by Chance

By Kathy Trump

“Great communities don't happen by chance” is the Jessica Stevens Community Foundation's new motto. JSCF's advisory board strived to find the right words to encapsulate who we are, and why we do the work we do in this place we love. Thanks to the magic of Shannon Post who led us in a workshop to improve our communication skills, we think we finally struck gold.

The Northern Susitna Valley is built around giving. Volunteers make sure our sewer system passes inspection, and our roads are scheduled for regular maintenance. Volunteers think about and practice for emergencies like fires and earthquakes, while others help organize and distribute food for the hungry.



Shannon Post

Volunteers make sure our kids have art supplies, healthy snacks, and books to read. Woven throughout is the vibrancy of our arts community, which is another reason why we love living here. Actors entertain us, musicians play in venues all over town, and artists create beauty. None of this happens by chance. It's the goodwill of competent people in service to their community.



We know we are lucky to live in this special place. JSCF would like to take this opportunity to thank those who have lent their talents and time helping us over this past year. We would like to start with the accomplished Shannon Post. Thank you for teaching us how to communicate more effectively. Next, we would like to thank June Okada for helping us produce a series of videos featuring our neighbors at work and play. Thank you to the people who spoke passionately on why you support the Jessica Stevens Community Foundation in these videos: Meghaan, Helene, and Jackson Blomberg, Deb Vaughan, Ruth Wood and John Strassenburgh, Corinne Smith, Philip Manning, Paul Button, Holly Stinson and Audrey Ebner of KTNA, Doug Smith, LouAnne Carrol-Tysdale, Mia Mangione, Randi Gryting, Bill Was, Ron Caldwell, and Larry Lovejoy of the Upper Susitna Food Pantry. Thanks to James Trump for your photos on our website, and Doug Gualtieri for being in a legacy video and brochure. Thank you Abby, Molly, and Kylie Bradley for agreeing to be in our legacy brochure and letting us quote you on why you give to us. Finally, we would like to thank the volunteers who served on our Healthy Community Grants Committee: Audrey Ebner, Kathy Ernst, Paula Strong, and June Okada.

In the spirit of Jessica Stevens, who made a lasting impact on this community, our foundation plans to continue being a positive force for our friends and neighbors. We urge you to take the time to thank a community volunteer or better yet, be one yourself. The Jessica Stevens Community Foundation always needs new volunteers. Great communities don't happen by chance.

Goals and Challenges

By Will Peterson

JSCF receives support from so many sources. Our main source of funds for the endowment is YOU; individual donations contributed each year are the base for our endowment. We raise one dollar at a time, one donor at a time. But we also have supporters that provide incentives for us, and for you. We are an affiliate of the Alaska Community Foundation; ACF provides administrative support. We receive a large grant from the MatSu Health Foundation (MSHF), and we are challenged each year by the Rasmuson Foundation.

Last December we successfully completed a four-year challenge from Rasmuson to raise \$40,000 each year. We met the challenge, and Rasmuson matched the \$40,000 each year. Through your individual contributions, the expertise of ACF, the financial match of Rasmuson, the generosity of MSHF, and a dynamic market, the Jessica Stevens Community Foundation endowment has now grown to be more than \$1,000,000! We are excited about that number; you'll hear more about it in the near future. There is so much more success to come. And, there's so much more work to do.

Rasmuson renewed the challenge! Just as we were feeling good about meeting it and hitting our goals, Rasmuson said they have another opportunity for us. They will match \$30,000 each year for the next four years. JSCF set a goal of raising \$10,000 for our grant endowment and \$20,000 for our operating endowment in this calendar year. We plan to continue to increase our funding for grants to local organizations, and we also need to grow our operating endowment to support our operations into the future.

JSCF does not have a large operating expense but it is real, and while we have been thriving with the support of ACF, we do need to be self-sufficient. Rasmuson's challenge is designed to help us get to self-sufficiency. With your continued support, we'll get there. Healthy communities don't happen by chance; healthy endowments don't happen by chance either.

2021 JSCF Healthy Community Grants

By Cici Schoenberger & Kathy Trump

The Jessica Stevens Community Foundation is excited to announce our 2021 Healthy Community grant recipients. When reviewing grant requests, JSCF considers five areas of interest, including compassionate health care, enjoyment of the natural environment, social engagement, artistic expression, and innovative education.

The American Cancer Society requested funds to transport Northern Susitna Valley residents to treatment and provide lodging as needed. How reassuring to know when experiencing a health crisis, a ride or a place to stay will not be a barrier. We cannot think of a better definition of compassionate healthcare.

Another JSCF area of focus includes enjoyment of the natural environment. The Denali Education Center (DEC) promotes a connection to nature by offering day camps at their Talkeetna campus. These programs allow kids to explore and become familiar with their backyard — the boreal forest.

The Jessica Stevens Community Foundation also promotes social engagement. Due to great interest, Talkeetna Youth Hockey created a curling committee and asked for a grant to purchase basic curling equipment. Talkeetna enjoyed two popular and engaging workshops and Bonspiels. This equipment will allow the Upper Susitna area to enjoy curling for years to come.

A dedicated art teacher is not supported by the School District at the Talkeetna Elementary School. Undaunted, the Talkeetna PTA worked tirelessly to fill that gap through grants and fundraisers. This year, they requested money for art supplies for students. JSCF happily granted the money in order to promote artistic expression in our youngest artists.

This year, we provided three grants in support of creative ways of learning. Firstly, we supported the Talkeetna Historical Society's mission to preserve our past and inspire the future. The Historical Society plans a major renovation of the schoolhouse museum. As keepers of our history, the Talkeetna Historical Society

does important, innovative work disseminating our stories. Next, we assisted KTNA in their mission to provide informational programming by granting money for local news. Finally, Denali Arts Council and Talkeetna Elementary School partnered in order to furnish three artists in residence for the elementary school. Jody Fitzgerald, Karen Mannix, and Bekah Mathiesen will work with kids to find their artistic passions. At JSCF, we feel all three programs exemplify innovative education at its best.



Lastly, JSCF's mission includes helping the underserved in the community. Three area nonprofits sought money to provide help to those in need. The Trapper Creek Free Box is a labor of love. Their grant money is used to remove trash, heat the building, and keep the lights on for a year all while providing gently used clothing for the Northern Valley. The Sunshine Community Health Center sought money to support their Families in Crisis Fund which helps families by paying for emergency needs. The Upper Susitna Food Pantry requested money for their annual Thanksgiving Blessing. Your donations

mean others in our community will be able to enjoy a Thanksgiving dinner.

The money to finance these grants comes from the interest earned on our endowment funds. Your donations make it possible for JSCF to continue to serve its primary purpose of supporting the community through its nonprofits who do a wonderful job of caring for our community. Thank you for allowing us to help worthy causes in our beautiful valley.

Advisory Board Members

Like many non-profits in the Northern Susitna Valley, JSCF is always looking for potential advisory board and committee members. Members of the foundation board typically spend a few hours a month helping build a healthy community. The obligations are minimal...the rewards are great. We're building an endowment that will help support organizations long into the future.

If you have board experience and are interested in the health of our communities talk to one of our advisory board members to find out more. If you have no board experience and are interested in the health of our communities talk to one of our advisory board members to find out more. JSCF is pretty good at asking for your money; we also need to ask for your time. "You give most when you give of yourself."



Board members Stacie Smiley & Jenny Packer

Just Keep Swimming

By Maureen Gaultieri

The impact of the pandemic on Northern Susitna Valley non-profits was as varied and wide-ranging as the list of possible COVID symptoms. Some non-profits ceased public-facing operations altogether, at least for a few months, while others ramped into high gear. All sought creative ways to safely adapt to the calamity while keeping their staff and the public safe. (Who could have expected winter drive-in movies, a virtual Oosik ski race, or Facebook Live art openings?) It was a combo platter of hard work, flexibility, and federal, state, and philanthropic grants that helped keep many organizations financially afloat.

And, this summer, it appears most of the local non-profits are not just floating...there is some bona fide swimming going on! As of press time, the 2021 summer schedule is once again complete with circus parades,



Watermelon lover Elliot Hunker

kids nature camps, art openings, and live music in the parks. JSCF board and staff were excited to share watermelon once again at Live at Five and Trapper Creek's Fireweed Festival. JSCF is cautiously optimistic that we can host our annual fall donor reception on October 16, 2021, albeit with many exciting changes in mind.

Save the Date
JSCF's Fall Reception is
Saturday, October 16th

Clearly this pandemic isn't done with us yet. We must retain our vigilance, our flexibility, our supplies of hand-sanitizer, and our commitment to our friends and neighbors. Just keep swimming, Northern Susitna Valley!

Great Communities Don't Happen By Chance

JSCF Focus - Compassionate health care, innovative education, social engagement, active enjoyment of the natural environment, and creative artistic expression...

JSCF's Local Advisory Board

Will Peterson(Chair), Cici Schoenberger,
Kathy Trump, Maureen Gaultieri, Jenny Packer,
Stacie Smiley, and Diane Ziegner

Emeritus Board Members

Robert Ambrose, Chris Mannix, Joe Page,
Sondra Porter, and Ruth Wood

Program Manager: Christie Seay

For more information: www.jessicastevenscf.org

Contact us at: jessicastevens@alaskacf.org

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