



# Jessica Stevens Community Foundation

*An Affiliate of The Alaska Community Foundation*

## Summer 2022 Newsletter

*Great communities don't happen by chance*

**Great communities don't happen by chance** — it takes dynamic non-profit organizations and dedicated volunteers. Jessica Stevens Community Foundation Program Manager, Christie Seay, was inspired to connect both new and seasonal residents with the many unique volunteer opportunities that abound. Knowing that most long-term residents discovered their initial place in this great community through early volunteerism — reading the news on KTNA, performing or selling tickets at a DAC production, cleaning up the riverfront, handing out food boxes at the food pantry — JSCF wanted to make it easier for fresh faces to find fun and rewarding experiences in town, not to mention an opportunity to give back to this great community.



To that end, the first annual **Talkeetna Non-Profit Volunteer Fair** was born! On Saturday, May 21st, fourteen local non-profit organizations gathered at the Denali Education Center to tell their story and connect with prospective volunteers and supporters. In addition to JSCF, organizations included:

- Talkeetna Historical Society
- Denali Education Center
- Denali Arts Council
- Talkeetna Bachelor Society

- KTNA
- Talkeetna Community Council
- Susitna River Coalition
- Talkeetna Recycling Works
- Upper Susitna Food Pantry
- Friends of the Talkeetna Library
- VFW Post #3836
- Denali Nordic Ski Club
- Sunshine Station Childcare Center

It was exciting to see so many Upper Susitna non-profits convened in one place with



the express purpose of strengthening their organizations. Seeds were planted for future volunteerism, engaging conversations were had, new relationships were forged, and delicious sausages were consumed. Though all would have preferred to see masses of work-starved volunteers ready to sign up, what the Volunteer Fair lacked in quantity, it made up for it in quality. Post-event, we learned of several beneficial matches made and/or strengthened that sunny afternoon — including a new Talkeetna Community Council member and a new JSCF board member.

Important conversations amongst the organizations included the obvious question of how to attract more volunteers. Some ideas included a happy hour volunteer fair with music and/or a virtual community-wide bulletin board of volunteer opportunities. Finding diverse and active board members is always a challenge in a small, rural community. Attendees pondered what happens when an organization struggles to find new leadership to continue operations. This has been a serious problem facing the local VFW Post who must, by charter, pull from a significantly smaller pool of volunteers, i.e. military veterans, but it is an issue all non-profits in our area empathize with.

Other discussions involved a unique take on legacy planning — in this ever-changing world, one wise organization has created a legacy plan for themselves, namely



designating a home for their assets in the unlikely event they folded (We're honored to report they plan to give it back to the community by entrusting it to JSCF).

As the host of the event, Jessica Stevens Community Foundation was pleased with the inaugural Volunteer Fair. We are grateful to all organizations and prospective volunteers who attended and are excited to improve upon it in the future. If you have any suggestions, please share them with JSCF Program Manager Christie Seay, at [christie@alaskacf.org](mailto:christie@alaskacf.org).



## Healthy Communities Grants

It's June, so it must be the time for the Healthy Communities Grants!! Our grant application period was open May 1st to June 15th to all non-profits in the Upper Susitna Valley whose projects align with the focus areas of JSCF. This year we are very excited that, due to the excellent return on our investments, we will be able to offer nearly twice as much money as we have in the past—a total of **\$35,000.00!!** We have increased our maximum award to \$5,000.00 in an effort to help organizations bring innovative ideas to fruition. Recommendations about the grant awards are made by a committee composed of JSCF Advisory Board members and non-board

members of the community. This committee will meet in early July, and the Grants announcement will be made in mid-July. We can't wait to learn what your donor dollars will be funding this year.

In conjunction with the opening of the Healthy Communities Grants application period, a workshop on writing small grants was offered to the non-profit organizations. It was led by Cici Schoenberger, Chair of the Grants Committee, and Corinne Smith, recently retired manager of KTNA. We thank Corinne so much for volunteering her time and expertise in this area. If anyone is interested in receiving a handout of Corinne's 9 tips for grant writing, please contact Christie, our Program Manager, at [cseay@alaskacf.org](mailto:cseay@alaskacf.org).

## From John Hennessy, JSCF's Newest Board Member

My wife Gretchen and I have been spending time in Talkeetna since 2006. We purchased a cabin in 2009 and have made many friends in the area. Talkeetna is a special place to us because of the strong community bonds and the effort that residents make to create and maintain its unique character. Both Gretchen and I love to hike, bike, and ski with friends in Talkeetna. I was invited to get involved in JSCF and jumped at the opportunity! My involvement with the Advisory Board began this February.

As the father of 4 active kids, most of my past volunteer experience was serving on boards and booster clubs for youth sports organizations. My professional career was in Environmental Science and Information Technology (IT) with the last 20 years focused on organizational development, strategic planning, and project execution. I still have a lot to learn about JSCF but I have experience, energy, and (as a new retiree) time to dedicate. My email



is [john@jessicasfoundation.org](mailto:john@jessicasfoundation.org) if you are interested in contacting me.

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In our next newsletter, we'll introduce our newly appointed Advisory Board Member, Jennifer Phillips. We also want to express our deep gratitude to outgoing board member Kathy Trump — we wish you great success in your future endeavors!

## Ed Rasmuson's Legacy in the Northern Susitna Valley

Early in 2022, philanthropist Ed Rasmuson passed away. As chairman of Rasmuson Foundation, he spent the last part of his very Alaskan life helping the non-profit sector of Alaska through the grant-making abilities of the foundation. Almost 1/2 billion dollars has been distributed statewide in support of community needs. In honor of Rasmuson and his philanthropic focus, the MatSu Health Foundation granted the Jessica Stevens Community Foundation \$25,000. JSFC has deposited the majority of that grant in its operating endowment and the balance will be granted out later this year.

Ed's name will be added to JSCF's memorial plaques located in the Talkeetna Post Office, the Senior Center, and the Trapper Creek Library.



In 2022, JSCF has a goal of raising \$25,000 towards or general and operating funds. If we meet this goal, Rasmuson Foundation will match the \$25,000. You can help make this happen - [Donate](#) online or mail us a check to PO Box 436, Talkeetna, AK 99676. If you are interested in legacy giving, visit our [website](#) or email [jessicastevens@alaskacf.org](mailto:jessicastevens@alaskacf.org)

Stay tuned for a new face for our annual reception this year. If anyone needs a creative outlet, the decorating committee welcomes volunteers. Contact Stacie Smiley at [stacie@jessicasfoundation.org](mailto:stacie@jessicasfoundation.org).

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**You can reach us via email at:**

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