

# Newsletter

## December 2018



### ESSAY CONTEST -

From left are Sydney Walker, Youth Council member; Kelsey O'Farrell, 2nd place winner; Colette VanWell, Watertown Area Special Olympics; Marcy Kohl, Watertown Figure Skating Club; Madisyn Meek, first place writer; Taylor Johnson, WFSC, and Alyssa Roby, Youth Council member.



### Essays Mean Dollars for Two Nonprofits...

Two nonprofits are unwrapping an early Christmas gift in the way of grants designated by winners of this year's Thanks for Giving Essay Contest sponsored by the Watertown Area Community Foundation. Special thanks to Watertown High School instructor Scott Walker who coordinated the contest this year and the WACF Youth Council for judging the essays.

First place winner, senior Madisyn Meek, wrote about her experience with the Watertown Figure Skating Club first as a young participant and now as an assistant coach. Her essay won a \$500 WACF grant to the Figure Skating Club.

Meek said she sees first-hand how the Saturday morning skating lessons affect young children. "The coaches do their absolute best with what they have and the kids often leave grinning ear-to-ear after lessons and chatting with new found friends," she said.

Second place winner was junior Kelsey O'Farrell, who wrote about the Watertown Area Special Olympics. The local Special Olympics organization will receive a \$250 WACF grant for her efforts.

O'Farrell has had personal experience with Watertown Area Special Olympics. As a member of the Dakota Gold Cheer Team, she and her teammates taught Special Olympics athletes a cheer routine.

Both Meeks and O'Farrell agreed that so many local organizations bring joy and opportunity to many.

As 2018 comes to a close, the Watertown Area Community Foundation thanks Laurie Benson for her service on the Board.

Laurie has served since 2006. At that time the Foundation had accumulative grants of \$2.9 million. By the end of 2018, we will have awarded more than \$7 million in total grants. She has been an integral part of the Foundation's growth and impact as it partners with donors and invests in the vitality of the greater Watertown area.

"I truly believe that Laurie's relationship with the Foundation began even before she was on the Board," said Jan DeBerg, WACF executive director. "Her father Earle Kinsman was a board member in the Foundation's early years and I believe her father and mother's passion for the community and giving back had a lot to do with Laurie's enthusiasm and dedication."

During Laurie's tenure, the Foundation awarded its largest grant in its history to the Boys & Girls Club; added "area" to its name to emphasize its impact beyond Watertown's borders; and its Women & Giving program surpassed \$100,000 in total granting.

"Laurie was a big part of all of it," DeBerg said. "She will be missed on the Board, but I know she will always be a friend to the Foundation and its good works."



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUB VISIT** - Liz Christianson, executive director of the Boys & Girls Club of Watertown, gave the WACF Youth Council a tour in December of the newly renovated and expanded Club. The Youth Council has awarded several grants to support the Club over the years.

**ARENA IS READY** - for year-round equine experiences thanks to the HHH fundraiser to heat and seat the Joy Ranch horse arena. HHH (Hope, Healing and Hoofprints) is led by former WPD Chief, Jo Vitek, and helps area children who are victims of sexual abuse. WACF, the Allen & Connie Fannin Family Fund, the Doug and Lynn Sharp Fund and others support the HHH effort.



## Watertown Area Community Foundation



**Front Row:** Angie Reppe, Laurie Benson, Kristen Henderson Liam Culhane  
**Back Row:** Dr. Jeff Danielsen, Joel Vockrodt, Charlie Ewalt

*The Watertown Area Community Foundation is governed by a volunteer board who broadly represent the Watertown Community. These board members are appointed by the: City of Watertown, Watertown Area Chamber of Commerce, Watertown School District, Great Western Bank, Wells Fargo Bank, N.A. and WACF Board Members.*

As of January 2018 our assets were approximately \$20 million. We have over 100 funds that provide grants and scholarships each year to residents and organizations in Watertown.