DONOR DOLLARS AT WORK  Here is a Joy Ranch crew that was among the camp counselors and staff that utilized the ‘Mack’ house during their stay at Joy Ranch this summer. The ‘Mack’ house, gifted by Kaye Mack to Joy Ranch, was moved from Watertown to Joy Ranch in October 2017. Giving Back 365 donors awarded a grant in 2018 to help with expenses of the interior remodeling of the house, which was recently completed. This crew assisted approximately 680 campers during the summer season of camps where ‘All are welcome.’ Thank you donors for making a difference.

It’s Back To School Time

By Dr. Jeff Danielsen, Watertown School District Superintendent and WACF Board Member

“Back to School” brings on a meaning all its own if you’re the superintendent. As students and faculty have just begun their 2019-2020 school year, I want to take this opportunity to thank the Watertown Area Community Foundation for its support of education and our youth.

As Watertown School District Superintendent, I also get the privilege of serving on the Foundation Board. In doing so, I’ve learned a lot about this community, that I have called home now for two years and I have seen first-hand how the Foundation makes a difference. Investing in the vitality of the Watertown area is the Foundation’s mission and investing in education and our youth is a big part of that.

Since coming onboard, both as superintendent and as a WACF Board member, I have participated in Lake Area Technical Institute’s annual Governor’s Luncheon. WACF has continually underwritten much of the luncheon expense so LATI students can get the optimum support available in scholarships by funds raised at the luncheon. WACF has also supported LATI expansion, as well as given financial assistance for supplies and equipment for the LATI Educare program, which provides childcare for students who are parents.

The Watertown School District has benefitted from partnering with the Foundation in many ways. The Customized Arrow Academy program, in which many students participate, has been supported by the Foundation. Many of these students will get one to two years of college on their transcripts before they leave Watertown High School. The Foundation has supported students in need and “at risk” students with grants providing school supplies, clothing and other necessities, as well as assistance for the Project SUCCESS program.

The Foundation has supported improvements to D.D. Miller Auditorium and the Civic Arena. Many of our schools have even received assistance for landscaping costs. The impact is always greater when collaborating with others and WACF and the Arrow Education Foundation are a perfect example of that. Whether it’s partnering to bring programs like Up With People or Be Kind to our community

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or administering the Arrow Education Foundation Fund at WACF, their impact through partnering continues to grow in more ways than one.

One of my favorite programs at the Foundation is the WACF Youth Council – another great way to mentor our young people. The Council is made up of three juniors and three seniors. They assess the needs of youth in Watertown, award grants to youth-serving projects and obtain leadership skills.

Our area schools also receive WACF support. The Foundation has awarded approximately $20,000 in grants to schools within a 30-mile radius since it implemented the Area School Partnership Program in 2017. The schools receiving grants this year were:

- Florence School District: $2,500 to help with school playground improvements.
- Hamlin School District: $2,500 to supplement purchasing zSpace computers and goggles.

Forty years of Looking Forward and Giving Back has meant a lot of great things for our schools and students. As the students and I start the 2019-2020 school year, I do so gratefully. Thank you donors and the Watertown Area Community Foundation!

“Philanthropy. What is it? What does it mean to you?” I still vividly remember the inaugural meeting of the Watertown Area Community Foundation Youth Council back in August 2001. Jan DeBerg, Executive Director of the Foundation was giving our newly formed board of high school juniors and seniors a lesson that none of us would soon forget.

Philanthropy is helping others especially through generous donation of money. I recall being a little nervous that first meeting, this was certainly unlike any group I had been a part of. More so, I was intrigued as Jan told us the unique history of the Watertown Area Community Foundation and the impact its donors have provided to our community.

She shared with us all that back in 1979, before any of us were born, a group of forward-thinking community leaders with a desire to provide a way for individuals to give back to our community, created the Watertown Area Community Foundation. They did so with just $3,000 left from Watertown’s Centennial celebration.

At the age of 16, the fact that the Foundation had grown from just $3000 to an endowment of millions was incomprehensible. Now, 18 years later, this fact still amazes me. Watertown and the surrounding areas have received close to $7M of good from Watertown Area Community Foundation donors and it all started with a group of forward-thinking community leaders and $3000.

I also remember the reverence Jan had as she shared the stories of donors like Dr. Edwin Harper, Mrs. Vera Way Marghab, and Mr. Kenneth Way. Each fascinating in their own way. As newly appointed Youth Council members, we understood the important responsibility we had to judiciously grant funds from these very generous gifts to best serve the youth of Watertown.

Looking back, my time on the Youth Council prepared me for so much of life. It opened my eyes to giving back, not just financially, but through time and talent. I recall being so impressed with the community leaders and volunteers who would visit our Youth Council meetings and share their organization’s story. These volunteers often times had busy careers and families and yet they made time to give back to our community in so many ways.

I also learned about respectful debate and discussion. As a Youth Council, we had $5000 to grant. With all the outstanding youth serving organizations in Watertown and with a diverse group of youth on the council, meetings had a fair share of healthy discussion – what great preparation for life!

Most of all, I learned that although the Youth Council may have been a small portion of the Foundation’s giving pie, we were mighty! To this day, the Watertown Area Community Foundation through programs such as Giving Back 365, Women & Giving, and the Youth Council allow donors of any capacity to make a huge impact on our community.

As we celebrate the Watertown Area Community Foundation’s 40th Anniversary, I would like to take this time to recognize and thank another group of forward-thinking community leaders.

Nancy Turbak Berry, Paul Hinderaker, Dr. Rick Melmer, John Redlinger, John Hopper, Deb Popham, and Jan DeBerg, who created the Youth Council of the Watertown Area Community Foundation, giving countless Watertown youth the chance to learn the true meaning of philanthropy first hand. Thank you! The opportunity to be a part of the Youth Council opened my eyes to Watertown’s generosity and instilled in me the value of giving back at any age.