Our mission: to strengthen communities and inspire giving.

From early literacy to college access, Community Foundation initiatives focused on Dubuque’s youth are laying the groundwork for a strong future.

Working with the Community Foundation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology researchers have delivered a report on ways to strengthen the Greater Dubuque region’s workforce. Read more and download the report at dbqfoundation.org/MITworkforce

THE PATH TO ADULTHOOD

From early literacy to college access, Community Foundation initiatives focused on Dubuque’s youth are laying the groundwork for a strong future.
As he enters his senior year of high school in Dubuque, Marcus Moore is looking to a bright future.

“Although I haven’t completely made up my mind about what college to go to, it’s definitely in my plans—I’ve been thinking about it since freshman year,” he said. He wants to pursue a career in electronics engineering. “As a young black man in today’s society, I must set high standards for myself.”

Students like Moore benefit from the efforts of the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque’s Dubuque College Access Network (DCAN), a coalition of leaders representing many sectors from education to employment. DCAN brings post-high school education or training within reach for low-income and minority students.

It’s one of the many ways the Community Foundation supports youth in the Greater Dubuque region, from early childhood through young-adulthood.

The Foundation’s youth-focused work encompasses an array of initiatives that, together, address issues impacting a child’s well-being, including family support, academics and college preparation.

**Early experiences matter**

“People’s outcomes in life—from health to academics to career success—are shaped by their experiences as young children,” says Shirley Templeton Vaughn, the Foundation’s community initiatives coordinator.

One way the Foundation works to ensure children have positive experiences is through the Dubuque Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, which aims to boost academic achievement by collaborating with parents, educators and nonprofit leaders to address school readiness, school attendance and summer learning.

“Research shows that disparities in academic achievement form long before children enter school and can widen without adequate intervention or supports,” says Rachel Williams, the Foundation’s youth impact coordinator, who oversees the initiative. “A key goal is engaging with families to understand their needs and connect them with resources that help them and their children thrive.”

Such resources include opportunities to focus on child brain health and social-emotional well-being, such as peer-to-peer support for parents, Williams says. Children’s mental state can influence success in school, particularly if they have experienced trauma or “toxic stress”—pervasive negative experiences like poverty, food insecurity or domestic abuse that they carry daily.

**Books in hands**

The initiative also focus on academics, particularly reading. Because reading proficiency by third grade is a key predictor of future academic success, early literacy is a priority, Williams says. Efforts to get more books in the hands of children and families, such as establishing “little free libraries” in the community, coupled with summer academic enrichment programs bring attention to this issue and, ultimately, improve students’ reading scores.
Literacy is an issue that resonates with supporters like Greg Welp, a retired teacher who established a fund with the Community Foundation to ensure that students in Dubuque public schools with the greatest needs can access books.

“Supporting this work meets a personal passion,” says Welp. “When children learn to love reading, they pass that love on to their younger siblings and friends. It all starts with making sure they have books.”

There are many ways to support the Foundation's youth-focused work, including gifts to individual initiatives or to Every Child, Every Promise. This fund helps address emerging needs of the region’s youth, including school readiness, child brain health and academics.

**A continuum of support**

The fund also helps address the needs of adolescents, such as college-bound teens like Moore. As Dubuque youth grow and stand at the threshold of a career, the Community Foundation works to ensure that they don’t experience a gap in resources to help them succeed.

For example, through DCAN, the Foundation has led the adoption of a “common agenda” among local education, nonprofit and civic institutions that brings awareness to college access barriers many students experience and promotes strategies to overcoming them.

“I knew getting to college wouldn’t be a walk in the park, but it would be a very worthy walk,” says Moore.

Now, thanks to the encouragement of educators guided by the DCAN common agenda, it’s a walk that Moore is ready to take.

Jane and Dave Heiar are driven by a commitment to service and philanthropy.

Whether on a mission trip to improve water access in Central America or meeting the needs of their neighbors at home in Dubuque, they work to create a strong future for all people—near and far.

“We’ve spent our careers serving others, Jane in education and I in local government,” says Dave. “And in our personal lives, we recognize that we are in a position to make a positive impact on the world, through volunteering, giving or other means.”

That commitment to serving the needs of others is why the Heiars work with the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque to plan how their giving will make an impact now and long into the future.

One way they have done this is by taking advantage of the Foundation’s estate planning services, which has given them tools to help them support causes they care about and that will provide more Dubuquers access to opportunities.

In addition, the Heiars believe in coming together with others in philanthropy to make a greater impact. Jane is involved with the Foundation’s Women’s Giving Circle, which addresses the needs of women and children in Dubuque, and volunteers with the Dubuque Dream Center, which provides programming to strengthen families and improve academic achievement. Dave, meanwhile, is active in coordinating efforts to connect Iowa’s state park system through the Parks to People initiative.

With roots in both Dubuque and nearby Jackson County, the Heiars understand that addressing the needs of the entire Greater Dubuque region is key to building strong communities. That’s why they support the Greater Dubuque Forever Fund, which helps the Foundation address emerging needs and opportunities across the region.

“We give to the Forever Fund because we know the Community Foundation has a keen awareness for the critical needs in our community,” Jane says. “It’s a matter of trust; we can’t predict what needs lie ahead, but we know and trust that the Foundation will have its finger on the pulse of our community’s well-being.”

“The Forever Fund is a way for us to give towards the future,” Dave adds. “The strength of a community depends on how well we take care of each other, and the Forever Fund is exactly that.”

If you are interested in the Community Foundation’s estate planning services or would like to make a gift to the Greater Dubuque Forever Fund, contact Faye Finnegan at faye@dbqfoundation.org or 563.588.2700.

**COVER:** Kaylee LeClere of Sherrill takes part in a race at Prescott Elementary School in Dubuque during a summer academic enrichment program through Dubuque Leisure Services, a community partner of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.
The Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque recently hosted two regional convenings, bringing together leaders from seven counties to discuss common challenges and solutions. “Over the past year, we have strengthened our region by enhancing the bonds among our eight affiliate boards and tying communities more closely together,” says Nancy Van Milligen, Community Foundation president and CEO.

Regional Roundtable
A diverse group of 36 leaders from across Greater Dubuque is learning about the strengths and needs of rural communities while building relationships, gaining knowledge and sharing ways to improve quality of life. Biannual gatherings of a new Regional Roundtable will focus on common concerns like building strong workforces and local economies, attracting and retaining families, and welcoming newcomers.

Regional Readiness Summit
From flooding to tornados, disasters are familiar in Northeast Iowa. Emergency managers, volunteer coordinators and city officials gathered this spring to strategize for a quick, efficient and safe response when disasters occur. While no one knows when disaster will strike, summit attendees will be able to help the region feel prepared and equipped to respond to the unexpected.

Rural Philanthropic Analysis
The Community Foundation’s regional approach helps unify Northeast Iowa’s small communities, showing national funders their investments can make a significant difference. In May, Campbell University spotlighted this approach and its impact in a rural philanthropic analysis featuring the Community Foundation. “In areas like ours, the communities are only as strong as the region, and vice versa,” Van Milligen says in the report. “There’s real power in coming together.”

Download the study at dbqfoundation.org/campbellstudy.