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FRANKLIN PARK

The site where the former Franklin School was has traditionally held a special place in the hearts of many Van Wert residents. We are committed to making sure that this property continues to produce great memories for everyone in our community!

After the property was transferred to The Van Wert County Foundation, a committee was formed to oversee the design and implementation of the park. They have been working hard to turn a schematic design into a buildable design that will be well used and loved. Construction documents are nearing completion. Implementation and construction will occur in phases over the course of several years.

Several of you attended a Ground Breaking Ceremony on July 31. This new park wouldn't be possible without the generosity and vision provided by VWHS Graduate Scott Niswonger, Class of 1965. He had many happy memories at the most recent school on that site. Many classmates were in town that weekend for their 50th class reunion! We were also privileged to have students with us who were among the last attendees of Franklin Elementary School. One of the students provided the honorary first dig!

We have been working with Architect John Fisher and Landscape Architect Jim Douglas and his design team to ensure that the aesthetics of place are appropriate. You may remember that both John and Jim were instrumental in the design of the Niswonger Performing Arts Center. Local design/build firm Alexander and Bebout will serve as General Contractor on the project. They are very familiar with local building practice and were instrumental on the construction of the most recent ground improvements at the Wassenberg Art Center.

Phase I will begin as soon as the weather allows in the spring. Expect new curbing, sidewalks, the shelter house, and trees as part of this phase. Playground equipment and the remaining sports courts will follow at a later date. Stay tuned for more information!



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK



You probably have used the word 'great' several times today. The most common meaning of 'great', according to Webster's Dictionary is: "of an extent, amount, or intensity considerably above the normal or average". It can also be used to describe a distinguishable individual or it can be used in place of 'very well.' The word can be subjective. What I think is great, may be average or ordinary to you (ex. a great athlete, a great leader, a great adventure, or great food). When words like this are overused, they begin to take on new meanings.

I believe that most truly great people are known only to their families. I recall a black and white photo I saw years ago. The subject matter was a family of five. It was taken in the 1930s, deep into the Dust Bowl era. They stood in front of a ramshackle house and dilapidated barn with no grass, trees, or landscaping. In the background was a field with withering crops. You could tell by their clothes they had very little. They were thin. The dog didn't appear to be in much better condition. Think of the many years (maybe a lifetime) of hardship they endured. Through the lean years, they continued to raise and invest in their family. By earlier definition, these were not great people. However, I believe that these people truly were great, especially to those they cared about.

I think of local friends, who married and raised a family. They started with very little, but they worked hard to keep food on the table and clothes on their children. They never missed a parent teacher conference or any of the activities their children were involved with. They were in church on Sunday and volunteered for the many causes they felt strongly about. They raised their children and entered into a simpler time of life. Their income increased and their expenses decreased. They were able to build a retirement nest egg.

Those friends were the same individuals who saw that a particular program needed guaranteed funding to stay vibrant. They made a decision to assist with the cause by starting an endowment fund with The Van Wert County Foundation. Many of these individuals were truly great people known only to their families. Today, The Van Wert County Foundation has assets totaling approximately \$75 million because of the careful planning and generosity of others. These funds have been set in place to perpetuate various organizations, causes, or to send our students to college.

If you have any interest in assisting with a need in the Van Wert County area, visit our office on Main Street. We can answer any questions and assist you with any help necessary to implement your thoughts or ideas.

Michael Gearhart, President

COMMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

You might remember playing with children's modeling dough. It is bright and colorful, and a delight to shape into new things! It comes in a bright yellow container that keeps it neat and tidy. This is great if you don't intend to use the dough. However, if you take it out of the container, all sorts of cool things can happen. It is still modeling dough, but it can take on new forms and shapes. Since 1925, The Van Wert County Foundation has done some pretty cool things. Through careful thought and with an innovative spirit, our Donors and Trustees have carefully crafted a source of funds that encourages knowledge and innovation and transforms our community into a truly great place to be!

Like every organization, we are constantly evaluating our impact to ensure that we are operating within our mission. *The Van Wert County Foundation was established to facilitate the mental, moral, intellectual and physical welfare and advancement of the citizens of Van Wert County, Ohio, and other geographical areas as may be directed by a donor.* As we continue to mold and transform, this mission is in front of us and guides our decisions. We are currently in the process of performing a comprehensive analysis of The Foundation. We are also setting goals for the future. We believe that we can take some insight from the children's modeling dough and make this great organization even better!

Fall is a busy time for The Foundation. We are in the process of reviewing a new round of grant requests. Appropriating funds is a difficult task. There are so many worthwhile projects that many great people are working on in our community. These decisions are guided by our Mission Statement and the directives that have been given to us by our donors.

We are wrapping up our Scholarship program for the year. We funded approximately 220 students this year. Scholarships amounts are needs based and range between \$500 and \$8,000. All Van Wert County and Paulding County graduates are eligible to receive scholarship funds after completing their freshman year in college with minimum GPA requirements.

Our Agricultural Producers have completed harvest (boy what a year). As one of our most secure assets, we believe that improving the drainage structures of our farm ground is important. The need for improvements was especially apparent after such a wet year. We have been working on a long range plan that guides us through an aggressive improvement schedule. We performed quite a bit of drainage work over the course of this year and will continue to invest into these parcels for the long-term benefit of the community.

So many folks are working hard to make sure that Van Wert is an exceptional gem in Northwest Ohio. The enthusiasm is contagious! It is always a joy to talk and work with each of you when I am out in the community. I'd love to talk about your passions for our Van Wert! Would you consider teaming up with us?

Onward!

Seth Baker, Executive Secretary



MAKE A DIFFERENCE....

The Van Wert County Foundation is only able to benefit the community because of the foresight and generosity of others. Consider choosing The Van Wert County Foundation to continue your passions and legacy!

YOUR GIFT WILL BE HELD IN PERPETUITY

The income generated from your gift will continue to benefit the community now and in future years.

GRANTS WILL BE MADE IN YOUR NAME

You may name the fund with your name, or that of your family, friend, or organization. Your fund is open ended and may be increased with additional gifts at any time. Grants from your fund will be recorded in the name of your fund as a lasting symbol of your caring.

YOUR GIFT MAY BE DESIGNATED FOR A SPECIFIC PURPOSE

As a donor, you may specify how the income is to be used. Should the intended purposes of your gift become obsolete in the future, The Foundation's Trustees will amend the provisions of your fund to continue to meet the changing community needs. You may also donate undesignated funds for use at the Trustee's discretion.

TAX BENEFITS

Gifts made to The Foundation (a public charity) will qualify for maximum deductions for income, gift and estate purposes.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

Annual reporting and filing of tax returns, public disclosure of all grant activities and a broad based Board of Trustees representing diverse areas of expertise assures continued use of public funds in the public interest.

CONTRIBUTIONS ARE PROFESSIONALLY AND PRUDENTLY MANAGED

The Foundation's Investment Committee provides the oversight of our investment portfolio. Investment managers are monitored and reviewed on a quarterly basis. Because funds are pooled for investment purposes, donors have the advantage of a diverse investment mix. The Foundation's Trustees are elected for their integrity, competence, knowledge of the community and concern for its philanthropic needs.

TO ESTABLISH A DONOR FUND

Contact Seth Baker at The Foundation office for further assistance in establishing your fund.

419.238.1743

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Wassenberg ART CENTER

What a difference the arts make! I used this expression in the last newsletter, yet I am still amazed that the power of the arts can fuel positive change. It's a snowball effect that we can all like.

I am proud to say that we were recently nominated for a Heritage Ohio award that encompassed the best reuse of an existing space. The Wassenberg Art Center received first place in this category! We were very excited and humbled to make the trip to Columbus to accept this award.

We co-hosted 'Eats in the Street/Art from the Fort' this summer with Main Street Van Wert. It was an amazing festival with approximately 1,000 people participating. We had gourmet food trucks, art from Fort Wayne, a great regional band, and a fund raising Duck Derby (yes, the spelling is intentional)! We are planning a 2nd Annual Eats on the Streets. The corresponding art exhibit will be called 'Take a Swing!' Artists will create actual swings that will be suspended from the trusses in the gallery. People will be able to interact fully with the art by being able to swing! The top prize in the exhibit will win some cash and have their swing installed permanently on the Wassenberg Grounds!

Our ArtReach program is again providing the youth of Van Wert with art training support. Studies have shown that students who have access to the arts exhibit increased test scores, and higher levels of critical thinking and math skills. One study found that high school students who received art or music classes during all four years of high school had elevated SAT scores of 100 points – regardless of socio-economic background!

Exhibits for 2016 are falling into place. We are excited for you to experience these new concepts in art. From photography to art interaction, we don't want to slow down! Stay tuned for a super-cool new art installation thanks to the generosity of **Statewide Ford Lincoln Mercury and Andy Czajkowski**.

For more information on our exhibits, classes or programs or to volunteer, please contact us via email at info@wassenbergartcenter.org or call 419.238.6837. You can register for classes or events at www.wassenbergartcenter.org.

Hope Wallace

Executive Director of the Wassenberg Art Center



PERFORMING ARTS IN VAN WERT



Van Wert is blessed with abundant access to performing and visual arts!

The Van Wert Area Performing Arts Foundation was formed in 2005 as a supporting foundation of The Van Wert County Foundation. VWAPAF, as we have become affectionately known, was established to direct the operations of the Niswonger Performing Arts Center of Northwest Ohio.

We are now in our ninth season of presenting concerts at the Niswonger. We began in 2007 with 14 concerts and an operating budget of around \$200,000. We have grown to 28 professional concerts, shows, and speaker events with a budget of over \$1,000,000. Our mailing list of patrons has grown to nearly 13,000 and we continue to grow. We have had visitors from every county in the state of Ohio, seven different states, and even Canada.

The ongoing support of The Van Wert County Foundation laid the groundwork for us to be successful. Our loyal, caring, and dedicated VWAPAF board members have carefully guided the organization. My staff and our many volunteers have been dependable, willing to serve, and professional in their duties. Many of you have supported us through ticket buying, memberships, underwriting, advertising, and other donations. I cannot give enough thanks! It is our dedicated work and your enormous support that has made Van Wert a destination place for the arts.

An endowment fund has been established with The Van Wert County Foundation for the Niswonger Performing Arts Center. This will allow us to continue our operations and events for years to come. I would love to visit with you in my office at The Van Wert County Foundation about how you can become a lasting patron of the performing arts in Van Wert.

To learn more about what is going on at the Niswonger, visit our website at www.npacvw.org or join us on Facebook at *Niswonger Performing Arts Center* where we share up to date pictures and information on performances.

I look forward to seeing you at the next show!

Paul Hoverman

Coordinator of Performing Arts

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