

The Virginia Community Foundation will be a community leader that inspires charitable giving in our region.

OUR VISION

The Virginia Community Foundation builds resources to fund projects that enhance life in the greater Virginia area.

OUR MISSION



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**2022  
YEAR IN REVIEW**

Virginia  
Community Foundation

## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the Board of Directors and myself, thank you for your continued support and dedication to the Virginia Community Foundation!

We want to share with you a summary of the past year in this 2022 Year in Review report. The success of the Foundation is dependent on the involvement and the commitment of the people who live and have lived in the community. It is through your support and dedication that the Foundation can continue to meet community needs and opportunities.



Our history is unique, our residents are hardy, and the opportunities for living life to the fullest are plentiful. Our community has much to offer: the tallest bridge in Minnesota, the Mesabi Trail, a golf course, parks, tennis courts and two lakes within city limits to name a few! By combining Foundation resources with community resources, unmet potentials can be realized. Together, we can build a better tomorrow for all who call this area home. This is Your community, Your legacy.

If you have any questions, or would like additional information about the Foundation, please contact me or one of our board members!

With gratitude,

Holly Lundgren  
Executive Director

## COMMUNITY GIVING



**Julie and Ralph Carlson**

### RALPH CARLSON FAMILY LEGACY

Ralph Carlson (1928 – 2019) lived most of his life in Virginia, attending Virginia schools and graduating from Roosevelt High School. He received a degree from the University of Minnesota Duluth in Accounting.

Ralph served in the US Army in Korea earning the Bronze Star medal. He worked as an accountant for US Steel – Minntac until retirement in 1983.

Ralph always said the best thing he ever did was marry Julie Amys. Together for 55 years, they enjoyed seasons tickets to the Virginia Blue Devils hockey games, spending time and fishing on Lake Vermilion, travel (especially to Hawaii and cruising), and spending time teaching grandkids to play Cribbage.

An ambitious man, Ralph was kind and caring. He took his responsibilities seriously. He updated his parents' house to make sure his mom could live in the house after his dad passed away. After working hard for 35 years, Ralph had saved enough money to enjoy his 36 years in retirement.

Ralph was a regular contributor to the Virginia Community Foundation. He enjoyed the murals, Olcott Park Fountain renovation, Lake Walk and restoration around Silver and Bailey's Lakes among other projects.

He believed in education, and he felt the use of funds for Virginia schools and programs were important.

*"My mom and I knew my dad would approve of a donation to the Virginia Community Foundation."  
Brent Carlson (Ralph and Julie's son.)*

# GRANTS

## Lyric Center Youth Program

The Lyric Center for the Arts provides education and culture opportunities for children across the Iron Range. The students of the Youth Program participated in the Spring Musical, Schoolhouse Rock Live! Jr. and the Summer Theatre Education program. Many students displayed their work through the Open Art Club.

## Bridge to Independence – Life Skills Work Boxes

The Bridge to Independence (BTI) is a secondary special education program for adult students ages eighteen to twenty-one in NE Minnesota. The Life Skills Work Boxes will be used by students to acquire skills such as, pattern recognition, counting, matching, sorting, and assembling to develop higher gross and fine motor actions. The students will learn to coordinate steps, work steadily and with others, and to ask for help as needed to complete a task.

## Backpack Round Up

The Backpack Round Up project matched funds to give away 200 backpacks filled with school supplies to area Quad City Children.

## Duane Bryers Mural Relocation

The “Mesabi Iron Range” mural painted by Virginia native and famed artist and illustrator, Duane Bryers in 1937 depicts the Iron Range’s history of mining. It is a rendering of both open pit and underground Iron Range mining and stretches 103 feet. The mural will be relocated from the Roosevelt Elementary School to the Iron Trail Motors Event Center.

## Wolverine Aquatic Center Video Scoreboard

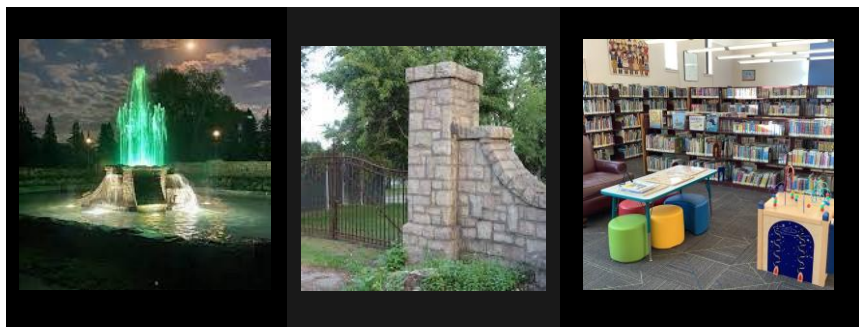
The scoreboard will be used by the Rock Ridge Public School Swimming Programs and community. The video board will livestream events, display lane-by-lane results and include live video and live results to viewers.

## Virginia Public Library Children’s Room

The Virginia Public Library Children’s Room Update Project will provide new shelving for easier access to picture books and easy read books for its youngest library visitors and their caregivers. Along with housing books, the plans are to use the shelving top to display art, Lego builds, and other creations made by children at library events. These new units will tie together the renovation of the children’s room making a welcome space for visitors and help children find the books they love to read.

## Olcott Park Entrance Gates

The Olcott Park Entrance Project – Phase 1 will address the accessibility into and out of Olcott Park at the Ninth Street North entrance along with providing an aesthetically pleasing entrance and exit with architectural stone and metalwork features to the most utilized park in the Virginia Park and Recreation Park system.



## SCHOLARSHIPS

### George Munig Economic Scholarship

The 2022 scholarship recipients were Hope Spaeth and Kristin Williams.

### Dr. Halvor and Emily Olson Scholarship

The 2022 scholarship recipient was Azalea Ray.

### Garett Plotnik Memorial Scholarship

The 2022 scholarship recipients were Kaari Harsila and Hope Spaeth.

### Dr. Marvin, Joseph, and Susie Skaurud Scholarship

the 2022 scholarship recipients were Rian Aune, Gavin Benz, Brooke Dahl, Klara DeVries, Ava Fink, Kaari Harsila, Elsie Hyppa, Abby Kramer, Britta Nordin, Hope Spaeth, Cassie Williams and Kristin Williams.

## PROJECTS

### MAIN STREET ECONOMIC REDEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (MSERP) \$1.2M

The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) launched its Main Street Economic Revitalization Program (MSERP) to create an economic redevelopment program that will award grants to partner organizations to establish programs to fund economic development and redevelopment projects. Through a partnership between the City and the VCF, an application was submitted to DEED and the VCF was awarded \$1.2M to administer grants and loans to eligible downtown building owners for the renovation, rehabilitation and expansion of properties located in the City-designated Redevelopment District.

The projects located in the Downtown Redevelopment Corridor of Chestnut Street include the redevelopment of Rocks the Jewelers and Strellman's manufacturing site that was destroyed by a fire in July 2021. The second project will assist in the development of a mixed-use building for a modern upscale brewpub and much needed commercial office space operated by G&N Enterprises.

The third project located in the Iron Trail Motors Event Center Redevelopment Area is a new 140,000 square foot, 131-unit Marriott Hotel. This project is a direct spinoff development from the newly constructed Iron Trail Motors Event Center that opened in September of 2021.

### MESABI FIT WELLNESS FUND

Upon the announcement of the closing of the Mesabi Family YMCA facility in Mt. Iron, a group of concerned community members organized to create the Mesabi Fit Coalition, a non-profit corporation working to assure community access to a wide range of recreation and wellness opportunities. This fund was established to advance opportunities for wellness and community gathering on the Iron Range.

#### 2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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