Since 1989, hundreds of men and women like you have selected the Elkhart County Community Foundation as their philanthropic vehicle of choice for gifting agencies or causes with needs desperately waiting to be fulfilled.

Our mission is to inspire people like you to make charitable gifts – through (not to!) the ECCF – that improve the quality of life in Elkhart County. As a public, tax-exempt philanthropic organization, we solicit and develop endowment funds, distributing the income from them to help provide solutions that make dramatic, life-altering change possible for Elkhart County adults and children in need.

With the assistance of the Foundation, we can help you define what you hope to accomplish – to realize Your Dreams – and to achieve your philanthropic goals.

Your philanthropic gifts made through the ECCF can help fulfill their dreams... and yours.

Your options range from designating an organization to benefit from your gift in perpetuity to an unrestricted gift that will be used to address emerging and changing community needs.

Follow these four simple steps to bring your philanthropic dreams to reality:

**One: Define your passion.**
What issues do you care about? What nonprofits do you currently give to? Which gives you the greatest satisfaction?

**Two: Create your plan.**
If you could improve three things in our community, what would they be? Do you prefer funding buildings, operations, projects or causes? How involved do you want to be with your gifting?

**Three: Establish your giving level.**
What are your financial objectives? What is your current tax situation? What is your charitable comfort level?

**Four: Implement your strategy.**
Collect ECCF information about philanthropic opportunities. Prioritize them and determine the best funding to accomplish your goals and dreams through the ECCF.
According to Oscar Schricker, “a lot of people had foresight and saw the possibilities….”

One of these caring individuals was Wilbert (Bill) Budd. An ECCF founding director and former treasurer, Bill was an engineer who served in many capacities at CTS Corporation including that of executive vice-president and senior director. He was best known, however, for his quiet dedication to numerous Elkhart-related philanthropic causes and organizations, most notably the ECCF.

One of his significant endowments helps fund numerous local projects and programs annually. He is also credited as the Foundation’s single largest contributor.

Sadly, Bill died in early August 2006 at the age of 93. While his presence and generosity are sorely missed, he will be warmly remembered. Bill always hoped to inspire successful men and women to make the most out of what they earned. “If you have been prosperous in this community,” he often said, “be a good steward and continue to give something back.”

“Dreams (can) come true. Without that possibility, nature would not incite us to have them…” John Updike

While vacationing in Naples, Florida in the mid-1980s, Elkhart County resident Oscar Schricker observed people being approached for financial contributions by the local community foundation. Thinking about the abundant wealth in Elkhart County, he and friend Jim McNamee began talking about the possibility of forming a community foundation in our county.

Each talked to colleagues and friends, including Bill Myers, who became the first president of what was to become the Elkhart County Community Foundation, and Dr. John Foreman, who generously made the first significant contribution. Others who became founding directors were Charles Aínlay, Jon Armstrong, Lehman Beardsley, Wilbert Budd, Arthur J. Decio, Samuel Hoover, William Johnson, Lee Martin, Richard Pletcher, Laura Rydson and Thomas Warrick.
Laura (Turner) Rydson has a history of Elkhart County philanthropy in her family, expressed through the generosity of her father, Basil Turner, former CEO of CTS Corporation, and her mother, Ethel Turner. Their gifts were instrumental in developing the Elkhart Area Career Center and continue to benefit Goshen College and Purdue University.

“Yes, I came from a philanthropic family,” Laura says. “A life lesson learned was that if you are blessed, you are duty-bound to give back… to return the blessings.”

As a founding director and the first woman to serve on the ECCF board, Laura noted at that time community foundations were the “wave of the future.” She is pleased with the growth of the Foundation, both in asset attainment and its sphere of influence in shaping the county’s future.

Laura’s husband, Marly, a retired financial and insurance executive, is impressed by the integrity of the Foundation and its relationships with responsible financial institutions. He is convinced that “the only way to have successful endowments is through your local community foundation.” He touts the benefits of gifting through the ECCF vs. a private foundation and appreciates the long-term relationships with local not-for-profit that gifting through Designated Funds encourage.

“Our gifts, made quietly through the Foundation, provide the opportunity to make people’s lives better,” Laura says. And thus the Rydsons see others’ dreams being realized…
Retiring after 32 years in education, former Northridge guidance counselor Dana Snider is pleased as he watches Elkhart County’s Dollars for Scholars® program grow. “Actually, it’s not just growing,” he says. “Through contributions and memorials, it’s snowballing!”

Viewing the school’s previous scholarship program as too limited, Dana initiated the first county Dollars for Scholars chapter at Northridge in the late 80s so that more high school students could be eligible for college funding assistance. Now, almost all Elkhart County public school systems have a chapter.

“Through Dollars for Scholars, the method for determining eligibility for college scholarships is excellent,” Dana says. “It’s fair, organized and a sophisticated 501c3, tax-exempt program.”

In 1992, the Northridge chapter affiliated with ECCF to establish a permanent fund. According to Dana, “it was a marriage at the right time with local money, local financiers and local kids. And it’s handled by the Foundation, an organization with integrity and the structure, investment experience and know-how the program needed.”

Other Elkhart County chapters soon affiliated with the ECCF to invest their permanent fund monies. Currently, these chapters have over $1.2 million invested and have raised over $5.3 million in scholarship aid since 92, enabling over 6,000 students to pursue a post-high school education. These are statistics that make a former guidance counselor smile… and admit that his dream is well on its way to being achieved.

After his wife Sonia’s death from leukemia in May 2006, retired professional Bill Caldwell wanted to not only honor her memory but also her professionalism and dedication to excellence in education.

Sonia had been a teacher since 1968, teaching fifth grade at Elkhart’s Mary Daly school for the last 15 years. Specializing in reading and math, she headed the school’s Chapter 1 curriculum development, helped develop Daly’s mentoring program and encouraged leadership in her students via their peers. Sonia had high standards for her students – some, as adults, came back to thank her.

Upon the recommendation of Mary Daly’s principal and teachers, Bill contacted the Elkhart County Community Foundation. After consultation with ECCF’s president, he established a Memorial Fund in Sonia’s honor through an Excellence in Teaching award for a Mary Daly teacher. This annual distribution to the school helps inspire excellence in teachers with great potential, thereby increasing the high quality of teaching at Mary Daly.

The Sonia Caldwell Memorial Award fulfills Bill’s dream of keeping her name alive in education because, for Sonia.

“teaching was a work of heart…”
The Elkhart County Community Foundation was introduced to John and Judy Goebel by their attorney, former ECCF board president George Buckingham. After researching the Foundation, the Goebels realized it was well organized, well run, knowledgeable about community not-for-profit organizations and a great steward of donors’ charitable gifts. John and Judy appreciate the ECCF’s personalized guidance in creating charitable gifting vehicles that would most efficiently address community needs as well as their philanthropic passions. Their Donor Advised Fund gifting enables them to give back to the community and to be hands-on with their gifting, continuing their lifelong involvement in voluntarism. They also like the idea that their gift will never be spent. Instead, it is pooled with others’ gifts and prudently invested – with the earned interest used for community grants.

Now retired, the Goebels have chosen to remain in Elkhart with a desire to make Elkhart County a better place in which to live. After having had their charitable funds invested and managed by ECCF for four years, Judy and John are convinced the Foundation is the right philanthropic vehicle for them.

“We have instilled in our children the importance of helping others,” John says. “The ECCF is a great vehicle to continue our, and eventually their, legacy. My passion is the development of the Wellfield Gardens. Judy is passionate about helping women in need through Soup For Success. While we have different goals in our gifting, one tool, the ECCF, fulfills both our wishes and helps us achieve our dreams.”
Field of Interest Funds

Because of his involvement with community not-for-profit organizations, Mike Hammes was keenly aware of the growing needs of northern Indiana senior citizens in the late '90s.

Then district president of KeyBank, Mike notes that, like other community-minded financial institutions, KeyBank "was very philanthropic, returning significant amounts of monies back into the community. Rather than being reactionary to needs, we thought it wise to be strategic in what we could do, focusing on a meaningful need that would strike a chord with others who would respond."

Through his efforts and those of other bank employees, KeyBank Foundation contributed $50,000, to be matched by the ECCF, to establish the Care for Senior Citizens Fund, a special Field of Interest Fund created to be a lasting – and growing – gift to assist the underserved elderly.

Why make such a gift through the ECCF? "To target our monies, to attract attention for giving opportunities and to know our Fund will be well cared for," Mike says. "This was a starting point for making positive change and stimulating others to do the same."

Like our community-minded philanthropists, the ECCF believes the quality of life in our county is dependent upon community leadership, community spirit, education, jobs, and strong core cities and downtowns.

We are committed to making major contributions toward shaping Elkhart County's future. Our three strategic areas of interest are: creating a vibrant economy, achieving educational attainment and attaining asset growth – to fulfill more dreams…
Unrestricted Funds

Elkhart businessman and ECCF board member Don Pletcher has a passion for the Fund for Elkhart County, the Foundation’s unrestricted endowment fund. “This is what we really need,” Don says with conviction in his voice. “The concept is terrific: Present monies for future needs.”

“I had the opportunity to serve on the ECCF’s Grant Committee and have seen first-hand the diligent review and fund allocation process,” he says. “As a grant committee member, you can’t have a bias for one area of needs. The more you learn and understand about how this process works, you realize this is the most efficient method of giving – and giving back – to the community. For good. For ever.”

His dream? A larger endowment for the Fund for Elkhart County. “I’d like to see this endowment grow from its present $11 million to $20 million. Being able to grant five percent of that amount to meet Elkhart County’s most pressing needs would fulfill many, many dreams...”

Through the encouragement of Richard Pletcher, ECCF founding director and current Nappanee Public Library board member, the library’s leadership has initiated an endowment fund through the ECCF to keep the library self-sustaining as they plan for the future. Pictured on the steps of the library is NPL executive director Linda Yoder.

There are many more inspiring, heart-warming ECCF stories to share. “Your Dreams” is just one of them. There are also “Your Gifts” and “Your Legacy”. But those are for another day.

In the meantime, to start turning your philanthropic dreams into reality, please call the Elkhart County Community Foundation at 574.295.8761. You may also learn more by visiting our website: www.elkhartccf.org.

Working together, we can make dreams come true.