

RESPONSIVE EFFORTS:
FOCUSED ON SOCIAL JUSTICE

A Whole Community

A Whole Community collects, sorts, organizes, and redistributes imperfect produce from Wayne County farms to local food pantries, hot meal sites, and low-income neighborhoods and housing complexes.

Every day, organizations on the front lines are working hard to serve our community, with support from the Foundation and other local funders.

Because it's largely rural, Wayne County has plenty of farms growing fruits and vegetables. Perfect produce goes to stores and markets, but produce with slight imperfections is considered unsellable. A Whole Community rescues this imperfect (yet perfectly good) produce, thereby increasing access to nutritious food. Even imperfect food can nourish our community!

Now, instead of discarding or composting imperfect produce, farmers set it aside. A local trucking company volunteers to deliver it to A Whole Community's facility, where volunteers sort, organize, and package it for distribution to the community. Some farms donate produce, while others are paid a modest amount to compensate farmers for their time and labor. Foundation support will help A Whole Community continue to provide the food our friends and neighbors need to reach their potential.



Since 2017, A Whole Community has distributed more than 365,000 pounds of produce to food pantries, housing complexes, and a domestic violence shelter.

The food goes to approximately 3,000 people each month.



Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Central Ohio

Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Central Ohio primarily serves economically disadvantaged students who live in eight school districts across Carroll and Tuscarawas counties. Many are still dealing with the effects of the pandemic, including learning loss and mental health struggles, which are greatly compounded by the challenges of living in poverty. Foundation support is helping the organization provide school-based mentoring to these students.

Any student between the ages of five and 18 can become a mentee, or a “Little,” after being referred by a teacher, counselor, or parent.

Mentors, or “Bigs,” are local high school or college students who gain school credit or volunteer experience through mentorship. The national organization (Big Brothers Big Sisters of America) provides standards for screening, training, matching, and supervising Bigs and Littles. Bigs help Littles improve their academic performance by helping with homework, encouraging regular school attendance, and emphasizing promptness in turning in assignments. Additional activities based on state standards strengthen Big-Little relationships and provide the Littles greatly needed social-emotional support.

For the Littles, these matches make quite a big impact.

Each Little’s performance is tracked in a number of categories, including academics, number of serious school infractions, and attendance.

In 2021, all of the Littles served sustained or improved their level of performance in at least four categories, and 98% sustained or improved their performance over a four-year period.

Catholic Charities Serving Portage & Stark Counties

Catholic Charities extends the love and compassion of Jesus Christ by providing tangible assistance to affirm human dignity, meet basic human needs, strengthen families, build communities, and empower others to transform their lives. This past year, the Foundation supported two programs in particular:

- The **First Step** program provides supplies and parenting supports to young Stark County families. Families receive bottles, clothing, formula, bedding, and diapers—but they also learn about infant and child development and strengthen their parenting skills. While the program was created to provide basic baby care supplies and information, it’s now offering longer-term support, including case management services and referrals to organizations that meet families’ concrete needs.
- The **Adult Day Services** program offers a safe, secure environment for older adults while family caregivers are attending to other responsibilities. The program enhances quality of life by providing opportunities for socialization, planned activities, meals, and basic health services at the St. Joseph Senior Living campus in Louisville.

Tri County Jobs for Ohio's Graduates

Tri County Jobs for Ohio's Graduates (JOG) serves youth who have dropped out of high school or who are at risk of dropping out. The program's supports help participants graduate and transition to job training, employment, or post-secondary education.

During this critical time in a young adult's life, the right support can make all the difference in life direction. JOG's guidance and support helps individuals reach their full potential. JOG takes a holistic approach, supporting basic needs like food and hygiene supplies while also providing academic intervention, counseling, employment readiness and career development services, and job or educational placement services. JOG also partners with local employers to help inspire and motivate participants to explore career pathways and develop the concrete skills that are in demand.

Many participants don't have support systems in place that will keep them on a successful path. To foster continued stability, JOG provides support for a full year after they graduate, start a job, or enter college.

A Foundation grant enabled the addition of two staff members to serve students at McKinley High School and Choices Alternative School, where waiting lists for JOG services were especially long. The funding also supports professional development activities for participants and incentives for reaching specific milestones (including graduation and employment retention).

In Stark County, JOG serves students at Alliance High School, the ASPIRE GED program, Choices Alternative School, McKinley High School, and Washington High School.

In 2021, 93% of JOG participants graduated from high school, and 80% got full-time jobs.

OhioGuidestone

OhioGuidestone's Tuscarawas County office offers school-based and community-based behavioral health services. It also operates a residential treatment facility for women and a domestic violence shelter.

Foundation funding has helped OhioGuidestone serve Tuscarawas County's burgeoning population of Hispanic immigrants, including many minors attending public schools. These youth, largely from Guatemala, typically travel to the United States to do farm work while living with a sponsor (often a family member, family friend, or acquaintance from their hometown).

Whenever we respond to emerging needs, we are realizing the Sisters' vision of social justice by serving as a community change agent.

As behavioral health challenges began to emerge, a local high school Spanish teacher invited OhioGuidestone's behavioral health specialist, who speaks Spanish, to meet with these students. Many experienced trauma during their journey to the U.S., and they live with many fears and anxieties while being far from home and family.

Thanks to Foundation funding, which supports approximately 140 hours of direct service, the specialist now helps approximately 50 individuals (primarily youth) by listening to them and equipping them with the healthy communication and coping skills they will need to meet their full potential.

