

Community Foundation, United Way share vision

Curt Detjen and Peter C. Kelly, For Post-Crescent Media 4:32 a.m. CST December 21, 2014

The organizations work together to try to improve our community.



(Photo: Getty Images/iStockphoto)

The Fox Cities area has a reputation as a region that works together to build a better community. The pride we feel in our community is reflected in positive change and a spirit of collaboration.

United Way Fox Cities and the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region have exemplified this spirit of collaboration and enjoyed a long history of partnership. Although in some communities, this may not be the case, we feel that we can serve the community best by working together. We have challenged ourselves to bring people and ideas together to create the change our community needs.

Since 2001, the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region and United Way Fox Cities have partnered, along with the Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce and Industry, to produce the Fox Cities

LIFE Study. This research-based community assessment, conducted every five years, has become an important tool in helping the Fox Cities learn more about key issues that we face.

The LIFE Study has been embraced and used by nonprofits, businesses, and government. Our community has responded with programs and initiatives to address many of the most pressing issues that were identified in the study. For example:

- Access to dental care for low-income and uninsured families was recognized as a need; today we have the Tri-county Community Dental Clinic. Since 2003, it has provided more than 77,000 patient visits by 104 volunteer dentists.

- United Way's PATH for Students, a school-based mental health therapy program, was developed in 2008, and has served more than 800 students in 10 local school districts.

We're proud of the response to the LIFE Study and encouraged by the many successful programs and projects that are making our community a better place to live and raise a family. Planning for the next LIFE Study is under way, and we will release the results in spring 2016.

In addition to collaborating on the LIFE Study, both United Way and the Community Foundation recognize that keeping nonprofit organizations healthy is vital to our community's ability to respond to needs. It's part of our long-range strategic planning to continue to support nonprofits and look for ways to make them stronger. For over a decade, together, we have sponsored nonprofit board trainings and one-on-one follow-up consulting opportunities.

Our organizations also have a shared vision regarding the importance of early childhood education. Because we felt that the establishment of the Community Early Learning Center was a major step toward this vision, we jointly supported their efforts by each granting \$150,000. We continue to explore other avenues of support for early childhood efforts because we believe it will have a long-term benefit for our children and the Fox Valley region.

We believe the work we do together is making a real difference in our community. But we also know that we're blessed to be in a community rich with "givers," thousands of people who come together to fund the important work of nonprofits.

We're humbled by the support of the Fox Cities community and extend our thanks to each and every donor who invests in organizations that build a better life for all of us.

Let us all resolve to continue our efforts to keep our community a safe, healthy, and enjoyable place to live, work and play. We wish you all the joys and blessings of the holidays and a happy New Year.

— Curt Detjen is the president and CEO of the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region. Peter C. Kelly is the president and CEO of United Way Fox Cities. They can be reached at pcletters@postcrescent.com