



# NewsLight

A newsletter for contributors and friends of the Virginia Community Foundation

*Your community. Your legacy.*

Summer 2016

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## NewsLight

NewsLight is the official semi-annual publication of the Virginia Community Foundation.

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Nikki Johnson  
Greg Niska

### Professional Staff

Ronda "Rudy" Harvey, Executive Director  
Terri Holcomb, Administrative Assistant

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Questions, comments or donations may be sent to:  
Virginia Community Foundation,  
P.O. Box 559, Virginia, MN 55792  
218-749-8239

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[www.virginiafoundation.com](http://www.virginiafoundation.com)



## Lou's Closet Fund grows to meet new need in our schools

The Lou's Closet Fund was the recipient of not one, but two, \$20,000 donations this year. In December the foundation was contacted by the original anonymous donor about making another sizable donation to the fund. Then again in March, Virgil Ann "Vergie" Zarnec, walked into the foundation and said she wanted to do something for kids. We talked about her options and told her about Lou's Closet Fund and she thought this would be the best fit for her donation. Prior to these donations the Fund

committee members met, and our school nurse; Misty Elliott, brought up a new need that she has been dealing with in our schools, children not passing the yearly vision tests. With the donations and the monies that are immediately available, the committee added the component of providing a new pair of glasses for the students that fell into this category.

We contacted several vision centers in Virginia and told them about our need and asked how we could get

*continued on page 2*



Greetings Everyone!

I just celebrated the third anniversary of my 10 year class reunion from Virginia High School. Yes....30 years out of Virginia High School. How is that possible??? It was just yesterday my friends and I were the ones sporting the Blue Devil uniforms, cruising the drag, building floats,

# Message from the Chair

and always making good choices. We had a fantastic weekend reminiscing about the old days of Virginia and catching up.

Many questions were fielded about what is happening in Virginia, the city we all love so much! This gave me the opportunity to talk about the great work the Virginia Community Foundation does every day!! The Downtown Revitalization Fund has a great group of people who are working hard along with the Virginia Business Association to grow and move forward. Every Thursday late afternoon/early evening there is a Farmers Market in City Center Park. The Olcott Fountain Project had their ground breaking which was a fantastic community event. Grants to the community are dispersed monthly which have lasting impacts to the community.

Back at our Foundation office, we welcome Terri Holcomb as our new Administrative Assistant. Terri always has a smile on her face. We also welcome new Board Members Nikki Johnson and Greg Niska. Nikki and Greg have brought with them business knowledge and a love of their community.

As the Virginia Community Foundation continues to celebrate its 25th year in operation, take a moment and consider what you are willing to do to support YOUR community. Together, and united, we can make Virginia what it was..... a safe, friendly, and thriving community. Please give what you can to support the Virginia Community Foundation

Thank you!

Laura Summers Bachschneider

## Welcome Terri Holcomb

Terri retired from the State of Minnesota in 2013 and soon found out that retirement wasn't for her. So in January 2016 she joined the foundation staff as our part-time administrative assistant. Although Terri was raised in Embarrass and graduated from Babbitt, she has spent the last 35 years living in the City of Virginia with her husband, Myron. They have 2 sons, 2 daughters and 5 grandchildren. In her spare time she enjoys boating on Lake Vermilion, crocheting, baking bread and most important, her two grandchildren that live in Midway.



## Lou's Closet Fund

*continued from front page*

the students an exam, ultimately a new pair of glasses. We wanted to make this process easy for the parents, the student, and providers. It was determined that we would work with two local providers; Midwest Vision and Exact Eye Care would provide the exam and glasses would be ordered through Walmart. The cost per student is approximately \$200 per child. Once the kids have glasses, seeing the board makes doing homework a lot easier. Since the beginning of April, Lou's Closet Fund has assisted 10 students in purchasing glasses.

Our anonymous donor couldn't be happier about the vision component to the fund as it allows us to help more students and meet another need in our schools. When Vergie heard about the vision assistance, it was a huge factor in choosing the Lou's Closet for her donation. As a child, she suffered with eye issues herself and said, "It makes me happy to help someone see well because I know how it feels when you aren't able to." As this fund matures, we hope to keep adding ways to assist Nurse Misty and our schools in offering help to students in need. For more information on the Lou's Closet, or to donate, please tour our website: [www.virginiafoundation.com](http://www.virginiafoundation.com).



# Olcott Park Fountain Restoration Committee reaches \$100,000 Milestone & Breaks Ground



On a beautiful, 92° day, Friday, May 6th at the site of the Olcott Park Fountain, a group of public officials, committee members, reporters and donors gathered for the first milestone announcement on the Fountain project. The project had an original goal of raising \$100,000 by August 15th to ensure support, as well as be a viable project of the City of Virginia, and to qualify for many grant opportunities. Not only was the milestone reached, but it was achieved on April 15th, four

months early. As our Mayor, Larry Cuffe stated, “this is an important day for Virginia, and our community has shown support for this project”. Mark Phillips, Commissioner for IRRRB stated, “we are very excited and will do anything we can to support this project” many other dignitaries spoke of the importance of the Fountain in our cities history, and shared memories of time spent watching the Fountain. Roosevelt teacher, Mr. Holmes, and his 5th grade class were on hand with

drawings showing what the Fountain meant to them and how excited they are that it will be beautiful again. The architectural renderings were displayed for all to look at, and refreshments were enjoyed by all. Earlier that week we received a call at the foundation from a woman saying she was 92 and from Duluth and thought this was an amazing project and wanted to help. She discussed making a donation and we talked about the groundbreaking ceremony set for later that week. Greg Gilness received a call from her and stated she wanted to attend the ceremony and bring her donation. Mary Aufderheide, along with her caregiver got there just before the start of the ceremony and delivered a \$10,000 check for the project. This was a wonderful story and donation, and the Foundation has kept all of our letters and cards with stories of what the Fountain has meant to so many. Whether it was a first date, engagement, first kiss, graduation pictures, or wedding pictures all of these stories have captured the true love of this Virginia gem. We have received donations from classes, clubs, visitors from other cities, our community, and all over the United States. Everyone has a story. The support for this project has been wonderful. The first milestone has now been achieved, but the project still needs to raise **\$400,000** in private contributions of which we are now at **\$133,000**. If you are interested in giving to the Olcott Park Fountain Restoration please go on our website: [www.virginiafoundation.com](http://www.virginiafoundation.com) or fill out and return the slip below. We say “thank you” for all of the support for this community project so far!

## Yes! I want to help restore the Olcott Park Fountain!

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Daytime Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Other Phone \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I wish my donation to remain anonymous.

☐ I would like to contribute \$\_\_\_\_\_ to the Olcott Park Fountain Fund at the following Level:

☐ Patron of the Fountain - \$5,000+

☐ Silver Level - \$500-999

☐ Platinum Level - \$2,000-4,999

☐ Bronze Level - \$250-499

☐ Gold Level - \$1,000-1,999

☐ Friend of the Fountain – up to \$250

☐ Enclosed is my check, made payable to the Olcott Park Fountain Fund

☐ Please charge my credit card, using the following credit card information:

Name on the Card \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_ 3-digit code \_\_\_\_\_

Please return your completed form to: Virginia Community Foundation, PO Box 559, Virginia, MN

## Foundation Welcomes New Board Members

The Board of Directors is pleased to welcome two new members. The new board members bring a wealth of knowledge, leadership experience, as well as represent businesses on Virginia's Main Street. Both share the common goal of raising money for our endowment, giving back to our community, and strengthening our downtown businesses.



**Greg Niska**

Greg was raised here in the Virginia area. After graduating from high school, he went on to attend college at the University of St Thomas in St. Paul, MN and earned a Business Administration degree. After working for a few community banks in the Twin Cities, Greg had the opportunity to return to Virginia and work for the only locally owned bank in town – Northern State Bank of Virginia. Greg thoroughly enjoys his job, spending time with family and friends, and enjoying all the community has to offer. In addition to being on the board of the Virginia Community Foundation, Greg also is a member of the Independent Community Bankers of Minnesota's Legislative Committee, the Virginia Public Schools Finance Advisory Committee, and the Virginia Lions Club.



**Nikki Johnson**

Nicki was raised in Virginia and graduated from high school here. She went on to receive a BS Degree from St. Cloud State University. Nicki grew up (literally) in the aisles of a small family business. Her parents owned the Ben Franklin store for twenty-some years. A strong work ethic, long hours and dedication to reach success, is no secret to Nicki. After graduating from college, she gallivanted around the country, much to her father's dismay, exploring mostly out west. It wasn't long before she returned, to call Virginia home, though the mountains are always calling. Nicki married Andy Johnson in 2006. They both take great pride in this community in which they choose to raise their school age daughter, and soon a son they are adopting. Nicki is the co-owner of Fine Edge Custom Framing located downtown Virginia. Not only as a business owner, but also as a citizen, she wants to take an active roll in preserving this great town, while also participating in much needed revitalization efforts and progress forward. Nicki has served on the Mural Committee for two years and is very excited and honored to sit on her first official board with the Virginia Community Foundation.

## Foundation Website Gets a Facelift

[www.virginiafoundation.com](http://www.virginiafoundation.com) doesn't look like it used to anymore. The Board of Directors decided after turning 25 years old, it was time to make a few changes to our website. Now when you go onto our web page you will see vibrant pictures of Virginia and our beautiful murals as well as have the ability to interact with the office staff with questions and feedback. We have also made donating a little easier by adding Pay Pal as our means of giving. You can go to any "Donate NOW" button and click on the Fund you would like to give to, and just fill out your donation. The website is still under construction but we are pleased to announce the updates and would love to hear your input, just send us a message.



**Connect With  
Us On Facebook**

*Connect with us at [www.facebook.com/virginiafoundation](http://www.facebook.com/virginiafoundation) for news updates, events, photos and discussion boards, and please share our link to your Facebook page to spread the word to friends and family.*

# Farmer's Market Comes to Virginia

We at the Virginia Community Foundation are proud to have been a financial part of The Virginia Market Square that recently opened in Virginia. Last August, at the request of the Iron Range Partnership for Sustainability, the City Center Park was dedicated by Virginia's Mayor, Larry Cuffe, to be a site for the future Virginia Farmer's Market. With assistance from the Minnesota Farmers Market Association, a grant from the Virginia Community Foundation and perseverance of the committee the Virginia Market Square came to fruition on June 9th. Already the market has offered homemade breads, hand-parched wild rice, kettle corn, and garden plants all while listening to music as an added benefit. The farmers market will be open every Thursday from 12:30pm to 5:00pm through

October or until the end of the growing season. Anyone interested in participating can do so by emailing: [virginiamarketsquare@gmail.com](mailto:virginiamarketsquare@gmail.com). Table fees are \$20 for the year plus \$5 per week.

The Iron Range Partnership for Sustainability is a grassroots non-profit corporation located in northeast Minnesota's Iron Range, and is dedicated in maintaining and improving the economic, environmental and social characteristics of our area so that our residents can continue to lead healthy, productive and enjoyable lives. The Iron Range Partnership for Sustainability has recently been awarded permission to plant neighborhood gardens in 4 locations throughout Virginia in conjunction with The Rutabaga Project, an effort of IRPS and AEOA to increase



**The tall guy in the back is Joel Hilgendorf of Gilbert. L to R in front is Marlise Riffel, grant writer, Gail Hilgendorf, Michelle Benda, Manager of the Market, and customer Anne Bien. Gail & Joel Hilgendorf started the very first farmers market in Virginia years ago.**

access to local healthy food. The first garden planted is located immediately adjacent to the Virginia Community Foundation office. For additional information you may contact them through their email: [growingtogethervirginia@gmail.com](mailto:growingtogethervirginia@gmail.com).



## Virginia Loses a Great Friend

How do we even begin to say goodbye to a man that has been around for 42 years

and has touched

so many lives. Hockey games, golf, the Miners Memorial Building, Land of the Loon or driving his blue, city vehicle and waving hello. John was involved in Virginia. John took care of Virginia. John was so many things to Virginia. On Saturday, June 18th we all watched John with his grandchildren as he rode in the 40th Annual Land of the Loon parade as Grand Marshal. John was happy. Later many visited with him at the park, talking of his upcoming retirement set for the beginning of July. John

assured everyone that things would be fine and he would be back. Early in the morning of June 19th we lost our friend. The news of John's passing was shocking and we are left with the same thoughts, what will Virginia do without John Bachman?

John was a man that wore many hats in his position as Park and Rec. Director, and one of them brought him to the Olcott Park Fountain Restoration Committee. This project was something very dear to John and his family. John was involved from the beginning when the Foundation was an idea that has grown into a community effort. John believed from the beginning, this is going to happen. He put his money where his heart was and made a sizable family contribution to the project in hopes that it would spur others to join the fund raising

efforts.

At John's funeral service it was visible what John meant to his family, friends and to this community. It was decided by his wife, Becky, and John's family to dedicate the bequests to the project that he believed in, and worked so hard to get started. We will always have the memories of working on projects with John, his gentle demeanor, or his dedication to our community- which is now his legacy. Our hope is that the Olcott Park Fountain Restoration project will reach its goal and the project will be finished in 2018 as planned. If you would like to leave a memorial for John Bachman you can go on our website at [www.virginiafoundation.com](http://www.virginiafoundation.com) or send your donation to P.O. Box 559, Virginia, MN 55792.





## Cleaning up our Downtown

You may have heard, and you may have seen that there is a group of business owners that have started a little buzz in Virginia. Originally it was being called the Virginia Business Association, then possibly reviving the Heart of Virginia, and as this group has been growing and getting focused it may change into something different. Whatever it is to be named, IT IS GREAT! The group has been meeting every other Monday since May and now has

a formal meeting space, meeting agenda's and minutes, and a clear focus on how we can make Virginia great again. The goal is to have all businesses represented, to be visible in our community, hold events, and to bring back a sense of safety in our downtown and neighborhoods.

In May, the group held the first of hopefully many clean-up nights. Everyone came with a broom, dustpan, and buckets to sweep the streets like our old friend, Marty

Biondich, used to years ago. Over 30 people showed up to support the efforts the Virginia fire chief and his crew. We were overwhelmed by the support. We started at the 100 block and went down both sides of Chestnut. The street looked great! Earlier that day you could find some business owners out sweeping in front of their stores and cleaning windows. Supporters drove by waving and honking saying, "Good job." It was a great night for community.

If you are questioning if anything is being done to save our community, the answer is YES. This group of business owners and volunteers that are focused on making Virginia safe and beautiful again. The next meeting will be held on July 25th at the Virginia Senior Center starting at 5:30 p.m. Future meetings are every other Monday at the same time and location. If you are interested in information or donating to the downtown revitalization, please visit [www.virginiafoundation.com](http://www.virginiafoundation.com).





## 2 0 1 6 G R A N T S

### **Virginia Foundation Grants Awarded since the last newsletter**

**\$350 – Lake Vermilion Guide  
League: Take a Kid Fishing**

**\$7260 – Iron Range  
Partnership for  
Sustainability: Virginia  
Market Square**

**\$1000 – Virginia High  
School: Front Unit Band  
Uniforms**

**\$5000 – Virginia High  
School: Choir Robes**

**\$1500 – Mesabi Community  
Band: Band Appreciation  
Outreach**

**\$10,000 – Olcott Park  
Fountain Committee:  
Restoration of the Park  
Fountain**

**\$1900 – Curl Mesabi  
Foundation: New Brooms**

### **Blue Pride Fund Grants Awarded since the last newsletter**

**\$2500 – Virginia High  
School: Virginia Football  
Program**

### **Virginia Education Fund Grants Awarded since the last newsletter**

**\$850 – ISD #707: Stand for  
the Silent**

**\$549 – Parkview Elementary:  
Skate Sharpening & Laces**

**\$1000 – ISD #706, Safe  
Student Activity Club: All  
Night Graduation Party**

**\$500 – ISD #706, Intro to  
Engineering: Solar Boat  
Regatta**

**\$1520 – Roosevelt  
Elementary: Laurentian  
Environmental Center**

**\$9000 – Virginia High  
School: Auditorium Audio  
Update**

**\$9000 – Virginia High  
School: Disney Experience**

**\$5000 – Virginia High  
School: Choir Robes**

**\$5000 – Virginia High  
School: Fundamentals of  
Physics**

**\$1000 – Parkville  
Elementary: Sensory Room**

**\$400 – Parkville Elementary:  
Apple TV**

### **Scholarships awarded**

**\$500 – George Munig  
Scholarship**



*Alexis Munter*

**\$5000 – Marvin Skaurud  
Scholarship**



*Kaitlyn Babich*

**\$500 – Garett Plotnik  
Scholarship**



*Riley Wilson*

**\$350 – Garett Plotnik  
Scholarship**



*Mallory Jarvi*

**\$500 – George Munig  
Scholarship**



*Amanda Patton*

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Foundation news. Sign up for our e-newsletter today at*

**[www.virginiafoundation.com/enews](http://www.virginiafoundation.com/enews)**

*E-newsletter subscriptions will also help us reduce overhead  
costs such as printing and postage, allowing the Foundation  
to spend more where it counts – on our community!*



Virginia Community Foundation  
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Virginia, MN 55792  
Phone 218-749-8239  
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Yes! I want to give something back to Virginia!

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
Gift Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Enclosed is my check, made payable to the Virginia Community Foundation

☐ Please charge my credit card, using the following credit card information:

Name on the Card \_\_\_\_\_  
Card Number \_\_\_\_\_  
Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_ 3-Digit Code \_\_\_\_\_

Funds will be applied to the foundation's endowment, unless specified below.

- ☐ Blue Pride  
☐ Mesabi Range Youth for Christ  
☐ Parks, Lakes and Recreation  
☐ Virginia Education  
☐ Fund for the Arts  
☐ Plomik Scholarship  
☐ Virginia Public Library  
☐ Munig Scholarship  
☐ Downtown Revitalization  
☐ Mural  
☐ Lou's Closet  
☐ Olcott Park Fountain

Please return your completed form to: Virginia Community Foundation, PO Box 559, Virginia, MN 55792