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Giving Back. Moving Forward.

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Community Foundation and Health Department Partner to Provide School Nurses

Ten years ago, the Community Foundation was part of an effort to provide school nurses across Charlevoix County and recently made a grant to sustain that service for hundreds of local children. “Healthcare services provided by school nurses are important in our local schools every day, and they are especially important today. We are so fortunate to be in a position to partner with the Health Department of Northwest Michigan to make these services a reality for the benefit of our students and our school districts,” explains Chip Hansen, president of the Charlevoix County Community Foundation.

A grant for \$130,000 from the Community Foundation will help the Health Department provide two full-time school nurses to serve in Boyne City, Boyne Falls, and East Jordan Public Schools for the 2020-2021 school year. Charlevoix Public Schools was able to fill the gap in health support on their own. Confirmed funding for the current school year will also provide time for the Health Department to engage with the school districts and other potential partners to explore collaborations aimed at sustaining the school nursing program for the longer term.

Young people see the value in health professionals located in schools. In fact, the Community Foundation’s Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) led the way, deciding on a \$32,000 grant as part of the full commitment. “While a nurse mainly supports physical health, that person is also instrumental in supporting students’ mental health. That might just be a caring conversation or it could be a referral to another type of help,” says Jayde Fazio, a member of the YAC. School leaders agree. “School nurses play important roles in coaching/training office staff, and administration, in how to evaluate and treat health-related situations,” says Pat Little, Boyne City Public Schools superintendent.

Beyond direct clinical care for students, “nurses work on policy, process, and systems change initiatives that benefit the entire school community,” says Natalie Kasiborski of the Health Department of Northwest Michigan. This role might be especially relevant as the year continues. Schools have been in session – and in person – for a few weeks now, but the situation remains uncertain due to the COVID-19 pandemic. If schools close, the nurses will continue to serve as liaisons to the schools and support the COVID response. “Keeping health care providers in our schools for as long as school is in session is so important for our kids, and provides so much support for local educators,” Mr. Hansen said, adding, “and, in the event that remote learning becomes the norm again, the nurses will continue to provide valuable advice and support to kids, families and our school leaders.”

The Charlevoix County Community Foundation is a grassroots charitable organization made up of various funds – all of them established by local donors. Some funds are earmarked for specific causes, and others are open-ended to meet changing needs. The funds are held in permanent endowment, so they can continue to grow and generate income to enhance the quality of life in Charlevoix County, now and for generations to come. For more information about the grant-making process, establishing a fund, or making a gift, please contact the Charlevoix County Community Foundation at (231) 536-2440, or online at www.c3f.org.

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