



100 Years and Growing!

By Glen W. Warner
Chair, 2nd Century Project
The Ashtabula Foundation

In 2017 The Ashtabula Foundation celebrated 95 years of assisting non-profit groups in Ashtabula County. “Our Mission is the betterment of Ashtabula County. We achieve this by administering the funds to reflect the intent of donors who wish to address the significant needs of Ashtabula County.”

At a trustee Strategic Planning meeting we reflected on the past history of helping so many groups over the years without much public recognition. Roy Bean led the discussion about the future. Specifically, in five years The Ashtabula Foundation would be 100 years old in 2022. How should we celebrate? Excitement grew when Roy asked, “Wouldn’t it be amazing to give \$1 million dollars each year to qualified nonprofit groups in the county?” This idea took on a life of its own and came up at all Board and Marketing meetings.

In June 2017 a highly motivated subcommittee of five Board members began to shape the vision of raising the \$5 million dollars within five years to increase the asset base which would allow distribution of \$1 million in grants each year. A key decision was whether to hire a professional fund raiser or to do it ourselves. The lower cost homemade approach was chosen as the quickest way to begin and because our contacts and goals were totally local to the county. This would be much more cost and results effective.

So began The Ashtabula Foundation 2nd Century Project quiet phase. I met with each Board Member to fully understand their views, leading to our internal 14 point “Common Commitment” statement to guide our efforts. Monthly “self-training” about our history led to a Master Plan written and adopted in July 2017. A new information rack card “Celebrating our Second Century” about designated or undesignated giving was printed. New, good publicity about the work of the Foundation began to appear more and more in local media. .

A large new contact list was developed by Board members and from files in the office by Associate Director Kelley Katon. People liked the simplicity of this thought; “The truth of the matter is that you can create a great legacy, help and inspire others by giving to a trustworthy philanthropic organization.”

We learned that people like to be respectfully invited to be an effective part of the future and to real current needs too. As a result, our five-year plan was reached in about four years and is still growing just as human needs are.

One example is that in 2020, the Foundation created a COVID-19 Task Force which addressed the Pandemic by funding an overall \$248,000 to 22 county Human Services organizations heavily impacted by the crisis, helping thousands. The Country Neighbor Program in Orwell – Ashtabula County’s Food Bank, was one of those organizations who received our funding to assist with the cost of 45 food Box distributions of over 400,000 pounds of fresh produce, dairy, and protein boxes between the months of June 2020 and March of 2021, serving over 29,000 individuals in Ashtabula County.

We have learned that we can render a fine service to our donors as well as to future grant recipients. Donors are pleased to establish their own charitable influence far into the next century by making their own designated choices, fulfilling their own life’s priorities.

Watch for next month’s article to learn more about the Ashtabula Foundation.

Celebrating 100 years of service!