

Infinity

Montana Community Foundation eNewsletter

April 2019

From Mary's Desk

Montana has lost another champion of philanthropy. Many of us have also lost a friend. While John Cowan may be gone, the legacy he created is powerful and generous. While you will read more about John and his life below, I wanted to tell you about his relationship with us here at MCF. We recently had a staff meeting and talked about John's passing. Several of us have worked with him over the years and we shared stories about the man and philanthropist he was.



There were a few things that struck me during that conversation. The first was when Nick Dietzen, our Philanthropic Advisor, said that John had made him better at his job by forcing him to learn. John asked lots of questions, some of them difficult ones. He didn't just sign paperwork and that was that, he wanted to understand the intricacies of gift planning and estate planning. He wanted to ensure his generosity would be stewarded with the utmost care and derive the greatest benefit for the charities he loved.

We often use the word partner and the phrase "partner in philanthropy." For us, these aren't buzz words or a clever marketing strategy. John chose us as his partner in philanthropy and he made us work hard for it, work we'll continue on his behalf for years and years to come. That is work we are honored to do, now and forever.

The second thing that struck me was legacy. John and his wife Elaine left an incredible legacy for Montana and in particular, for Polson. Through their generosity and foresight, through John's careful questions, planning, and partnership, the Greater Polson Community Foundation and several other worthy nonprofits in the area will benefit

from the remarkable legacy the Cowans created. It is because of people like John that communities like Polson will continue to thrive, long after those people are gone. It's because of people like John, that we are so thankful to be a part of creating a legacy of philanthropy for Montana.

Sincerely,



Mary K. Rutherford
President & CEO

John Cowan - Losing a Friend and Champion of Philanthropy

On March 11, we and many others lost a great friend and generous philanthropist in John Cowan. John was born in Bellefonte, PA on March 7, 1937 to John D. Cowan and Elizabeth Fowler Cowan. The family soon moved to Charleston, SC and subsequently in 1949 to Stamford, CT. He attended the Hotchkiss School where he met lifelong friend and Polson resident Chuck Jarecki. A graduate of Middlebury College, John received an MS in Accounting from the University of Wyoming.



John owned and served as CEO and Chief Fiscal Officer of two post-secondary and proprietary schools: Wyoming Technical Institute (1970 - 1977) and Bryman School (1977-1996). For twenty years, John consulted as a CPA Auditor for Title IV Student Financial Aid Programs at Post-secondary Educational Institutions. Of particular note, he consulted to the US Department of Justice and was admitted as an expert witness for the prosecution of educational institutions for misuse of student assistance funds.

John and Elaine fell in love with Montana while visiting friends in Polson. "I wanted Elaine to see this part of the country," John said. "We fell in love." When rainy weather hit the Flathead valley during a fishing trip in 1990 and denied them access to the outdoors, the Cowans started looking at real estate. They eventually purchased a home on Flathead Lake and moved to Montana permanently in 1997.

"What brought us here was the beauty and quality of life," John said. "Both of us were raised in small towns." The Cowans felt at home in

Polson.

John and Elaine helped found the [Greater Polson Community Foundation](#), which was established in December 2007 because of the efforts of lifelong friends of the Cowans, Chuck and Penny Jarecki. John and Chuck attended Hotchkiss School together, and later their friendship brought the Cowans to Polson. "We became interested in the Greater Polson Community Foundation through the Jareckis," John said. "Penny had done a little research and called us one day to broach the question of starting a community foundation. Elaine was always a better spokesman than I, so we decided that she would join the board and I would be office staff."

"The Greater Polson Community Foundation would not be what it is today without John Cowan's vision of achievable goals and professional advice. He benefited Polson in many ways through his commitment, expertise, and generosity. He definitely made a difference in our community," said Penny Jarecki.

Due to the efforts of the Cowans, Jareckis, and other citizens of Polson, the Greater Polson Community Foundation grew quickly. Today, it has an endowment balance of more than \$600,000, and they have awarded more than \$470,000 in grants. When Elaine passed away in 2009, John established a bequest to benefit the Greater Polson Community Foundation.

"We supported the Greater Polson Community Foundation with a bequest because it's a conduit for the changing needs of the community," John said. "Our thought was that if you give money to the community foundation, they could channel it to where the need is greatest as society changes."

We are so incredibly grateful for the amazing legacy John helped create for his community. He will be sorely missed.

Nick Dietzen Becomes Certified Fund Raising Executive

[CFRE International](#) has named [Nick Dietzen](#) as a Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE). Nick Dietzen, Philanthropic Advisor for Montana Community Foundation, joins over 6,300 professionals around the world who hold the CFRE designation and is one of just 27 who hold the designation in Montana.



Individuals granted the CFRE credential have met a series of standards set by CFRE International which include tenure in the profession, education, and demonstrated fundraising achievement. They have also passed a rigorous written examination testing the knowledge, skills, and

abilities required of a fundraising executive, and have agreed to uphold Accountability Standards and the Donor Bill of Rights.

"The CFRE credential was created to identify for the public and employers those individuals who possess the knowledge, skills, and commitment to perform fundraising duties in an effective and ethical manner," said Mary K. Rutherford, MCF President and CEO. "This voluntary achievement demonstrates Nick's commitment to the fundraising profession and the donors he serves. As an organization, MCF is dedicated to providing the highest level of service and professionalism to the many constituents we work with and Nick's certification is another example of this trust we hold dear."

CFRE recipients are awarded certification for a three-year period. To maintain certification status, certificants must demonstrate on-going fundraising employment and fundraising results and continue with their professional education. Employers and donors who work with CFREs know they are getting a professional who is committed to the best outcomes for their organization and has the requisite knowledge and skills.

The CFRE certification signifies a confident, ethical fundraising professional. Since 1981, CFRE has set standards for fundraising professionals. As the only globally recognized fundraising certification, CFRE indicates professionalism, confidence, and ethics. It is how today's fundraiser shows accountability, service, and commitment to making a difference for good. The CFRE certification program is accredited by the American National Standards Institute and is the only accredited certification for fundraising professionals.

As the premier global credential for career fundraisers, the CFRE designation is endorsed and supported by the world's leading professional and philanthropic associations.

It's almost time to give where you live!

Give local events are happening all across Montana on May 2nd and 3rd this year. This 24-hour online and live giving event is an opportunity to connect generous donors to the nonprofits serving the local areas where they live. The results in past years have been amazing, with some communities raising hundreds of thousands of dollars to support important causes and charities. Even if you don't have a local giving event in your area, it's still a great reminder and opportunity to make a gift to a local nonprofit where you live.

Office Space Available

If you're on the hunt

for an office, we have a great spot for you! There is a 225 sf office available in our Helena building located at 33 S Last Chance Gulch. The office is located on the Walking Mall Level and has a large window facing the Downtown Walking Mall. Our building also comes with a fantastic staff lounge and two



common conference rooms filled with great technology. We're looking for a tenant interested in a 2-3 year lease. For more information, please call us at (406) 443-8313.

Grants Awarded to Benefit Darby Community

Grants were made from the [Darby Town Community Endowment Fund](#), established at MCF by Richard and Barbara Ackerman and enhanced through generous contributions from community members in 1999.

Grant requests were reviewed by the Darby Town Endowment Fund Committee. Awardees include:

- Darby Bread Box for a concrete sidewalk and produce refrigerator: \$1,000
- Darby Community Library for new computers and updates to the computer room: \$4,110
- The Greater Ravalli Foundation for emergency food vouchers for children: \$500

Barbara Ackerman stated that, "The Darby Town Endowment Fund Committee is once more pleased to announce grants to support the Darby Community; in particular, the above referenced grants. I am very fortunate to have the continued support of the following committee members: Juli Winthers, Ron Birkle, Terri Mountford and Lloyd Rennaker. They have been extremely helpful in the evaluation of the proposals we received. My husband Dick Ackerman would have been very pleased with the grants we have awarded. Hopefully, the Darby Town Endowment will go forward next year to continue the grant process. We thank the South Valley Community for their past support and hopefully their future support."

Generosity at Work

March brought a hint of Spring (and a big blast of Winter) as well as some amazing grants -- 44 to be exact totaling more than \$160,000! Grants were made to nonprofits all across the state, from Darby to Townsend, Billings to Bigfork and many more. We hope you too will consider [putting your generosity to work](#) in Montana by supporting the charities and causes YOU care about!



Our mission is to cultivate a culture of giving so Montana communities can flourish.

Copyright © 2018. All Rights Reserved. [Privacy Policy](#)

