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## Local community foundation makes leaving legacies easy

By Adele Israel

The idea of creating a legacy may seem complicated but Western Colorado Community Foundation (WCCF) makes it incredibly easy. In fact, its mission is to “promote charitable giving, build and manage charitable legacy funds and endowments and to provide grants and other resources to benefit the residents and communities of western Colorado.”

WCCF President and Executive Director Anne Wenzel said there are many misconceptions about leaving a legacy with the foundation.

“We can meet donors wherever they are,” she said.

Involvement with WCCF is not limited to wealthy patrons but can be accessed by anyone who wants to support specific causes in the community. People with a serious one-time tax liability can mitigate tax consequences while benefiting local causes.

According to the foundation’s website, [www.wc-cf.org](http://www.wc-cf.org), the logo for WCCF is a spiral which represents three concepts.

“The circle reflects a sense of community and our connectedness to others. The spiral reflects the power of endowment, a permanent gift that keeps on giving. The petroglyph symbolizes those who have been here before us and who have left their mark.”

The foundation, which began in 1996, offers several ways to secure your legacy. For as little as \$5,000 you can create a named fund using your name or named to honor someone else. Frequently, funds are named after children or grandchildren. When you name a fund after progeny, you actively engage them in philanthropic values and teach them to

give back to the community.

An End-of-Life Fund is created through a bequest or your estate. This is an effective way to support something important to you for perpetuity. This type of fund is especially attractive to people who do not have heirs.

Wenzel has been at the foundation’s helm for 15 years.

“I love this job,” she said. During this time period the assets of WCCF have grown from \$1 million to a whopping \$45 million. The foundation manages 250 different funds including three \$7-8 million endowments. Wenzel is in the process of lining up two signature estate gifts bringing in an additional \$8-10 million. This concentration of money has a huge positive impact on our community.

Scholarship funds are popular with donors and the foundation manages 28 such funds. Donors can serve on the selection committee, read essays submitted by applicants and then track progress of scholarship recipients.

“Scholarship funds can be very satisfying to donors,” Wenzel said.

Recently funds from an anonymous donor have been designated for a new initiative to alleviate child hunger in western Colorado. Few people realize 45 percent of the children enrolled in Mesa County Valley School District 51 are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. Hungry children cannot focus on learning and fall behind in school. These children

are often doomed from the start, struggling to break the cycle of hunger and becoming productive members of society.

The initiative is supporting an emerging hunger alliance, which will serve as an umbrella



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organization for 35 different entities dealing with this problem. Identifying gaps in services is essential and summer feeding is a major concern. When school is not in session many children go hungry.

“We are trying to raise awareness and generate more funding to address this issue,” Wenzel said.

WCCF has established excellent relationships with local nonprofit agencies making it easy to determine the most pressing community needs.

General purpose community grants are designated to help meet these needs. For example, adjusting to the new laws legalizing marijuana for adults, the Meth Task Force has broadened into the Drug Threat Oversight Committee. Money for this effort is provided by the foundation. The same is true for the expansion of Riverside

Task Force educational programs into Grand Junction High School.

Another way to support community projects is simply to donate to the foundation. You can specify which fund you'd like to enhance and all donations are fully tax deductible. For more information go to the foundation's website at [www.wc-cf.org](http://www.wc-cf.org) or call 243-3767 to discuss options and receive the brochure “Thinking About Your Charitable Legacy.” ■



Jo Waldeck established a legacy fund in 2010 to provide nursing scholarships at Colorado Mesa University and eight of her favorite nonprofits.

Her daughters Kathy Gaginni and Susan Diaz received a Special Friend award from Hilltop for the Waldeck Fund.

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