



Impact Report: Year One and Two of the South Huron Vitality Fund

A Report to South Huron Council

Submitted by Pat Morden, ED, Sunset Community Foundation

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Executive Summary

The Foundation is deeply grateful for the Council's vision and generosity in creating the South Huron Vitality Fund. We are delighted that Council felt our granting expertise, married with the local knowledge of the South Huron Community Fund Committee, would result in good grant-making and a significant impact in our communities.

As with so many other activities, granting from the Vitality Fund has been affected by the pandemic. A later application deadline in 2020 resulted in three strong applications, but two of the projects were unable to go ahead and the funds have been reallocated to a later time. In 2021, we had three applications by the April 1 deadline, again likely a smaller number than might have been expected. Two applications were granted the full request, and one received a small contribution.

It's easy to see these grants as small amounts, but for the organizations who receive them and the people they serve, they make a big difference. Thank you!

2020 Grants

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the planned April 1 application deadline for the Vitality Fund was no longer feasible. Indeed, many organizations were still reeling from the impact of cancelled events and other disruptions by mid-June, the revised deadline. As a result, we received four applications: Lions Club of Centralia-Huron Park, Big Brothers Big Sisters South Huron, Huron Waves Music Festival, and Winterfest.

Members of the South Huron Fund Committee and experienced members of the Grand Bend Community Foundation Grants Committee were invited to a meeting on June 29. Tom Prout, Harry Stuart, Frank Palen and Pat Morden attended, with Penny Nelligan and Janette Baillie unable to join us.

With the contribution of the Municipality of South Huron, the endowed fund stood at approximately \$60,000. In addition, Council made \$10,000 available in flow-through funds. As a result, the committee had approximately \$11,500 to grant.

The Lions Club application was deemed ineligible because it lacked a charitable partner. The other three applications were strongly supported. In the end BBBSSH and Winterfest received their full requests, \$2,000 and \$3,000 respectively, and Huron Waves received the remaining \$6,500. This recommendation was reviewed at the Foundation's next board meeting on July 22 and approved.



That was only the beginning of adaptations to our new circumstances. By fall it was clear that neither Huron Waves nor Winterfest would be able to go forward as planned. In February 2021, we

received a formal request for reallocation of funds from Heather Boa at Huron Waves. Her letter noted that the Festival had produced a virtual event, Huron Waves Celebrates the Season, launched a monthly newsletter, and enhanced its website. Boa requested that the funds granted for a May or December 2020 event be allocated for use in May 2021, "or whenever the Kingdom Choir is able to once again travel and perform." The Foundation agreed to this. (It is now clear that the Festival will not be happening in May 2021 but we're still hopeful for 2022.)

Winterfest also requested a reallocation of its grant to winter 2022, and the Foundation agreed.



The funds granted to BBBSSH were used to support and strengthen the traditional mentorship program at a difficult time. The organization found its usual fundraising events cancelled and the consignment store closed most of the year. Bigs and Littles were unable to meet in person, and volunteer

recruitment was challenging. The funds were spent towards a revamped volunteer recruitment and training process, and brand awareness and promotion, to decrease the waiting list.

2021 Grants

The Foundation was thrilled to receive an additional \$50,000 from the Municipality toward the permanent endowment of the South Huron Vitality Fund in 2021, bring the total to approximately \$110,000. This meant we had approximately \$3800 to grant this year.

The April 1 deadline for applications was communicated in a variety of ways, including in the Foundation's quarterly newsletter and on the website, blog, and FB page. We were reluctant to do a lot of promotion, given the relatively small amount available for granting. In the event, the pandemic ensured that we received just three applications: the mentorship program at Big Brothers Big Sisters South Huron, a proposed Connection Centre at Noah's Ark, and a field journal program by Friends of Pinery Park.

Pat Morden, Tom Prout, Frank Palen, and Mary Peterson attended, with regrets from Janette Baillie, Jim Jean, Deb Gill, and Harry Stuart. After a thorough discussion, the grants committee recommended the following: \$1,500 to BBBSSH, and \$2,000 to the Connection Centre at Noah's Ark. The committee recommended that FOPP receive the remaining \$300, on the understanding that the field journals thus funded would be distributed to schools in South Huron. These recommendations were approved by the Board of Sunset Community Foundation on April 21 and distributed accordingly.



Amy Wilhelm of Big Brothers Big Sisters South Huron reports that the funds were used to create a new brochure (reflecting the addition of Clinton and Seaforth as part of the organization's service area), a banner stand that can be used at the office and at special events, and a new poster. The materials were distributed in a large mailout to schools, libraries, social service agencies and other groups in the region. They have been well received and have attracted both clients and volunteers.



Andrea Loohuizen of Noah's Ark and the Community Table, reports that the Connection Centre has been open all summer. The funds were used to purchase and install a washer and dryer for use by clients. The machines are used by people with precarious housing, who can now take a shower at the Centre and then don clean clothes. In addition, the machines are made available to other people living in low income, for whom the cost of a laundromat can be significant. "That's a real impact," she says. "If they can take the money they

spend on laundry and use it for food or housing, it's a big life change for them.”



Gayle Jeffery of Friends of Pinery Park reports that the Field Journals have just been published, after some unavoidable delays, and will soon be distributed to local schools.

Other News from Sunset Community Foundation

The Foundation had a busy and productive 2021, responding to the challenges of a global pandemic. To support charities supporting those hardest hit by the pandemic, the Foundation raised more than \$120,000 to create a COVID Relief Fund. In addition to these funds, the Foundation was responsible for granting \$70,000 from the federal government's Emergency Community Support Fund. In all, the Foundation granted more than \$250,000 during 2020. Our endowment grew to more than \$3 million.

Also in 2020, the Foundation made the decision to change our name from Grand Bend to Sunset Community Foundation. This re-branding was designed to open the door to more partnerships like the one we enjoy with the Municipality of South Huron, so that we can serve other parts of Huron County. We will be proud to use the Vitality Fund as an example of how the Foundation can help build strong, vibrant, and just communities throughout the County.

During 2021, one fund has already been created by a group in Huron County. The Huron Entrepreneur fund will make grants to Huron County charities. In addition, the capital will be invested in Community Futures Huron, creating another benefit to County residents. The Fund has received three donations to date and has a strong committee ready to move forward with endowment building. The final arrangements for this new impact investment are under way.

In view of all the rapid change, the Foundation is currently revising its bylaws and policies, and continuing to build relationships and promote awareness throughout our communities. The deadline for our fall granting program in September 30, and we are expecting several high-quality applications.

Moving Forward

Sunset Community Foundation is proud to be part of the South Huron Vitality Fund. Through this fund, Council is helping local organizations have a real impact in many areas of our communities. Even better, by creating a permanent endowment, Council is ensuring that funds will be available for many years to come.

Currently the Fund produces approximately \$4,000 per year (although discussions are under way to consider raising the annual disbursement). Of course, we hope that the Fund will continue to grow, so that it can do even more.

Our future goals include:

- Continuing to build the South Huron Vitality Fund endowment fund with support from Council
- Continuing to make high impact grants in South Huron
- Broadening the grants committee to include representation from across the Municipality
- Continuing to raise awareness of the Fund and grant availability among local charities and other organizations