



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

I still wash my dishes by hand and peel potatoes with a paring knife like my Grandma Larson. I think about her while I do it, about having the same hands as hers. She must have peeled a million potatoes with those hands. And while I believe we carry traditions along with us, I also love that I press a button on a washing machine, instead of cranking Grandma's wash wringer, and I am grateful for that change every time I put a load in.

Change is constant. It can be beautiful. It can be brutal. It is living through what is in front of us, adapting, improving, and letting go of what no longer serves us. Sometimes change scares us and sometimes it inspires us. Sometimes we have no choice in it and sometimes we do.

There is a beautiful balance between the past and the horizon. I see it again and again in our communities. The joy and tradition in parades, family fun nights, pow-wows and trips to the races that call and connect us to the places and people we love, year after year. They are touchstones as we move through the seasons of our lives. The ingenuity and grit of small business owners who support these events and are supported by them, as well as the nonprofit leaders and community volunteers who show up and never give up, to serve community, even when times are tough.

We face an era that has challenged many of us in ways not seen in our lifetimes. With almost another year of unprecedented challenges behind us, front-line workers are still without reprieve, and the loss, stress, grief, tragedy still present.

The Blandin Foundation is preparing towards the horizon, interviewing, surveying, listening to hundreds of rural leaders. We are learning and responding to the current and emerging needs in the region and Rural Minnesota. We are looking closely at what we do and how we do it. We are digging into data to understand what drives persistent problems, what points to possible solutions and what resources are available for rural Minnesota. We are looking at how technology can improve our impact and how critical technology is to rural practitioners. We seek to do better, to have greater impact, and outcomes that make differences.

This is a tender time in history. We are all so very full and empty. We are strong people and we are interconnected in so many ways. It is said that triumph is only possible in how crisis and tragedy are handled. The Blandin Foundation is fortunate to witness and marvel the remarkable work of Rural perseverance, courage and ingenuity that is building the story of triumph for generations to come.

Thank you for everything you give and everything you do towards better tomorrows. We marvel you and wish you a new year filled with kindness and generosity.

May we continue to build communities where respect, harmony and integrity grow for us all.

Tuleah

Blandin Foundation President & CEO



Rose Carpenter

The greater Grand Rapids community is filled with support for its people--a community of strength with relationships of connections and roots.

Now as a student at The College of St. Scholastica and following its Benedictine values, one of which is community, I continue to emphasize the significance of community and how I was immersed in it, around me, from the beginning of my experience at Greenway High School. For me, the Raider community is the Raider family. As sporting events open again, the sea of green I see in the crowd reassures me that the Raider family is alive and well, and just as full of Raider pride as ever. I spent my senior year of high school at the Minnesota State Hockey Tournaments cheering on the GHS hockey team. I remember the enormous sea of green I saw there. I was recently at a University of Minnesota

Duluth hockey game where the Greenway Mini-Mites faced each other for a game between periods. I saw spots of green in the crowd and people I am grateful to say I have in this Raider family. I felt the sense of home with these close bonds.

My former high school educators continue to welcome me with open arms back into the classrooms as I am able. These simple moments of warmth and openness makes this incredibly unique. Even through the challenges that 2021 brought upon everyone, it is our community that goes out of our way to show compassion and support even through these difficult times--that is what makes me thankful.

As I reflect upon 2021 and the triumphs and tragedies each one of us faced, it was through these triumphs and tragedies that brought the

Itasca community together, and the Raider family from near and far, current students and former students, to check in on one another and show compassion.

The determination of the community brings me courage and hope for the future. This year has brought continuous change and adaptation, but the way people reacted and evolved with it gives me hope for the future. With financial support, lending a hand, and true human connection and care, our community did it all for each other. From local business owners and educators, to health care professionals, the strategies and messages they used through these changes related to the COVID-19 pandemic allow me to believe that the community I call home is one community that can face the challenges to come, through connectivity, togetherness, and innovation.

Rose graduated from Greenway High School in 2019, and is in her third year as a Communications major at the College of St. Scholastica where she serves as Student Trustee on the Board of Trustees at the College and is the Enrollment Management Intern. She is a first-generation college student, and recipient of a Blandin Foundation scholarship.

As a 2019 graduate of Greenway High School, I am thankful for the continued support from my local community in my college achievements and endeavors.



Blandin Foundation 2021 Itasca Area Grants and Scholarships

Blandin Foundation connects with and funds community builders as they move rural places forward. The Foundation awards grants, provides community leadership training, and engages rural communities on topics such as early childhood care and broadband. At least 60% of grant funding is dedicated for the local communities. The following are grants and donations in 2021.

Advocates for Family Peace Operating support in 2022-23 to promote safety, equity and peace to families experiencing domestic abuse. \$100,000	City of Coleraine Capital support to upgrade roof and entryway of the Coleraine Public Library. \$10,000	ElderCircle Operating support in 2022-23 for ElderCircle and the Home Visitor Program. \$134,000
Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency Donation in support of the Community Connect event. \$1,000	City of Deer River Capital support to upgrade and renovate the White Oak Society buildings for community use. \$30,000	First Call for Help of Itasca County Operating support in 2022-23 for information and referral services. \$100,000
Bigfork Valley Foundation Capital support for construction of community wellness spaces, public restrooms, and storage for the Edge Center for the Performing Arts at the Bigfork School. \$150,000	City of Deer River Project support for Itasca Area Small Communities Development in Deer River. \$150,000	First Call for Help of Itasca County Project support for capacity building to support technology and financial management upgrades. \$24,500
Blackberry Township Project support for Itasca Area Small Communities Development in Blackberry Township. \$50,000	City of Effie (Bigfork Valley Foundation, as fiscal agent) Project support for Itasca Area Small Communities Development in Effie. \$75,000	Forward Health Foundation Donation in support of Party in the Park community event. \$1,000
Blackduck Area Seniors Donation in support of Blackduck Area Senior Citizen's Center building signage. \$1,000	City of Grand Rapids Donation in support of the Annual Independence Day celebration. \$1,000	Girl Scouts of Minnesota and Wisconsin Lakes & Pines Operating support in 2022-23 for the Girl Scouts program. \$20,000
Boys and Girls Club of the Leech Lake Area Operating support for the Deer River unit of the Boys and Girls Club of the Leech Lake Area. \$150,000	City of Grand Rapids Project support to learn about and market the impact of Minnesota's Automated Rural Transit Initiative as part of the Broadband Program. \$50,000	Grace House of Itasca County Operating support in 2022-23 to provide shelter for individuals experiencing homelessness. \$100,000
Boys Club of Duluth Inc Operating support for the Boys and Girls Club of Grand Rapids and Greenway in 2021-22. \$308,000	City of Grand Rapids Project support for a pilot project to test the technological, social, economic, and environmental viability of operating a Connected and Automated Vehicle (CAV) service. \$450,000	Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation Project support to create a fund for community projects in Inger. \$50,000
Boys Club of Duluth Inc Project support for the New Year's Eve Community Celebration in Coleraine. \$5,000	City of Keewatin Project support for Itasca Area Small Communities Development in Keewatin. \$150,000	Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation Project support for a 1:1 challenge grant to grow its operating endowment. \$50,000
Buck Lake Improvement Club Project support for Itasca Area Small Communities Development in the Buck Lake area. \$30,000	City of LaPrairie Project support for Itasca Area Small Communities Development in LaPrairie. \$100,000	Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation Operating and transition support in 2022. \$80,000
Children's Mental Health Services/REACH Donation in support of the 9th Annual Stomp on Stigma 5K. \$500	City of Nashwauk Project support for Itasca Area Small Communities Development in Nashwauk. \$150,000	Grand Rapids Arts Donation in support of First Friday Art Walk live music events. \$1,000
City of Bigfork (Bigfork Valley Foundation, as fiscal agent) Project support for Itasca Area Small Communities Development in Bigfork. \$100,000	City of Northome Project support for Itasca Area Small Communities Development in Northome. \$150,000	Grand Rapids Economic Development Authority Program-related investment loan to acquire two downtown commercial lots for future development. \$140,000
City of Bovey Project support for Itasca Area Small Communities Development in Bovey. \$150,000	City of Marble Project support for Itasca Area Small Communities Development in Marble. \$50,000	Grand Rapids Players Project support to produce "Hamlet...Mostly." \$3,000
City of Calumet Capital support to establish the "Take a Five" gathering and learning space for individuals using the Mesabi Trail. \$3,500	City of S-Lake Project support for Itasca Area Small Communities Development in City of S-Lake. \$50,000	Grand Rapids Summer Celebration Inc Donation in support of the 2021 Tall Timber Days event. \$1,000
City of Cohasset Project support for building a new playground at the school and community center site. \$10,000	Community Café Operating support in 2022-23 to help reduce hunger. \$80,000	Grand Rapids Yellow Ribbon Citizens Committee Donation in support of Itasca Area Veterans and National Guard members. \$1,000
City of Coleraine Project support for Itasca Area Small Communities Development in Coleraine. \$150,000	ElderCircle Donation in support of the 2021 Community Thanksgiving Dinner. \$1,000	Great Minds Learning Center Project support for capacity building to research grant resources for financial sustainability. \$4,800
		Habitat for Humanity of Itasca County Operating support in 2022-23 for the local Habitat for Humanity organization. \$100,000

Awarded Grants and Donations

All grants awarded by the foundation are listed at www.blandinfoundation.org/articles/grant-listings

Total 2021 Grants \$14,047,161

January 1 — December 31, 2021

Itasca Area Grants: \$10,436,522	Rural MN Grants: \$3,610,639
---	---



Harris Township

Project support for Itasca Area Small Communities Development in Harris Township. **\$100,000**

HAVEN A Place for All

Project support to sponsor the second annual Community Pride Picnic. **\$4,147**

Independent School District 2 Hill City

Operating support for the Early Start program in 2021 and 2022. **\$166,000**

Independent School District 317 Deer River

Donation in support of Deer River High School's 2021 post prom event. **\$500**

Itasca Area Schools Collaborative

Operating support for the Invest Early Program in 2021-22. **\$2,000,000**

Itasca Area Schools Collaborative

Project support for NEXT – Career Pathways Program capacity building in 2022-23. **\$360,000**

Itasca Community College

Program support for direct administration of Scholarship Program. **\$239,400**

Itasca County Agricultural Association

Donation in support of children's education programs. **\$1,000**

Itasca County Sheriff's Office

Project support for Fill the Boat Christmas Gift Drive. **\$5,000**

Itasca Economic Development Corporation

Operating support for infrastructure and capacity building in 2021-22. **\$750,000**

Itasca Economic Development Corporation

Program-related investment (loan) to establish the Itasca Small Business Relief Fund II during the COVID-19 health and economic crisis. **\$150,000**

Itasca Economic Development Corporation

Project support to extend the impact of Itasca County's participation in Launch MN as part of the Broadband program. **\$50,000**

Itasca Economic Development Corporation

Project support to promote an Innovation Center to provide education and training to area students and community members as part of the Broadband Program. **\$10,000**

Itasca Hospice Foundation

Project and operating support during the COVID-19 health and economic crisis. **\$10,000**

Itasca Orchestra and Strings Program

Operating support in 2022-23 to provide orchestral music to adults and youth. **\$100,000**

Judy Garland Children's Museum

Operating support in 2022-23 to continue and broaden the school service program. **\$60,000**

KOOTASCA Community Action

Project support for inclusion work. **\$305,675**

Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe

Project support to Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe for families in need during the COVID-19 health pandemic in Itasca County and Leech Lake. **\$45,000**

Let's Go Fishing MN

Donation in support of the Let's Go Fishing community event. **\$1,000**

MacRostie Art Center

Operating support in 2022-23 to provide visual arts and educational programming to residents. **\$90,000**

Marcell Family Center

Operating support in 2022-23 for the family center program. **\$80,000**

Marcell Township

(Bigfork Valley Foundation, as fiscal agent)
Project support for Itasca Area Small Communities Development in Marcell Township. **\$50,000**

Nashwauk Township

Capital support for construction of a community playground. **\$5,000**

Nashwauk Township

Project support for Itasca Area Small Communities Development in Nashwauk Township. **\$40,000**

Northern Community Radio

Capital support for remote production equipment. **\$7,000**

Northern Community Radio

Operating support in 2022-23 to provide news and information to residents. **\$100,000**

Northern Lights Community School

Project support for restorative conferencing training. **\$5,000**

Northland Area Family Services Center

Operating support for the Northland Early Childhood Collaborative in 2022-23. **\$180,000**

Regents of The University of Minnesota

Project support to implement the smart streetlights pilot project as part of the Broadband Program. **\$50,000**

Reif Arts Council

Operating support in 2021-23 for performing arts activities. **\$360,000**

S-Lake Local Indian Council

(Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation, as fiscal agent)
Project support for Itasca Area Small Communities Development in the S-Lake Community. **\$150,000**

Second Harvest North Central Food Bank

Operating support in 2022-23 for food bank operations. **\$100,000**

Special Olympics Minnesota

Operating support in 2022-23 for the Special Olympics program. **\$40,000**

Support Within Reach

Operating support in 2022-23 to assist victims of sexual violence. **\$100,000**

Trout Lake Township

Project support for Itasca Area Small Communities Development in Trout Lake Township. **\$30,000**

United Way of 1,000 Lakes

Operating support in 2022-23 for administration. **\$70,000**

Voyageurs Area Council of Boy Scouts

Operating support in 2022-23 for Boy Scout programming. **\$20,000**

Blandin Foundation Scholarships


279 local students from 11 different schools were awarded grants of up to \$5,500. **\$1,130,500**

Visit Us


blandinfoundation.org

100 North Pokegama Avenue
Grand Rapids, MN 55744

Stay Connected

 @BlandinFoundation

 @BlandinFound

 @BlandinFoundation



Blandin Foundation™
STRENGTHENING RURAL MINNESOTA

Jeff Love

Jeff is a local entrepreneur and graduate of ILT Academy, a program partnered with Itasca Economic Development Corporation to teach and train local innovators and entrepreneurs the skillsets needed to develop successful ventures. After solidifying his idea throughout ILT Academy, Jeff recently won second place in The RINK pitch competition for his invention The Water Mender, an innovative water filtration system. Blandin Foundation supported this training with a \$50,000 grant.

When I think about 2021 and all of its hard lessons, it doesn't take long to remember how blessed we are to live in this resource rich area. It is such a privilege to leave work, jump in the car, find solitude and recharge one's soul on any of the many lakes, trails or public forests in the area. It is easy to forget or take these things for granted, but no one else has this so close to home, and in such abundance, that the odds of you being alone are greater than finding yourself in a crowd.

Even with the COVID 19 challenges we faced, we continue to see ordinary people step up and do extraordinary things. Whether it is organizing a local foot race, a blood drive, volunteering, or adapting their business to cater to our new way of life, our little community shows its character. Our little community is showing its character. I'm so proud of all the friends, colleagues, and neighbors who have emerged as leaders, even when it is easier not to.



As we turn the page on 2021, I hope we can learn to understand each other a little more, bury a few hatchets. Try to take a step back from politics, and a step towards relationships. We can do anything here! We make paper,

supply half the state with power, make tractors, and hundreds of other things, all inside of a 10-mile square. Just like the abundance of natural resources, we have solid human resources and will no doubt come out of this thing swinging!

Karen Olson



Karen is the mayor of Northome, Minnesota. She's part of a group of local leaders active in identifying priorities and projects to grow Northome into the future. Blandin Foundation recently awarded a \$150,000 grant for a number of those priorities including library improvements, signage, campground improvements, community marketing and more.

As 2021 becomes our history, we look forward to the possibilities awaiting us in 2022. We have all experienced enormous change, but it is how we embrace that change that makes us the people we are.

I am thankful for the community that I live in. Like most other communities, there have been ongoing challenges and businesses have been struggling. But through it all, the community has shown support for each other and has created a circle to continue that support.

It's encouraging to see community members step up with creative ideas to make our community the center stage. "Let's have a Holiday Parade!" was the statement made a year ago when we were struggling through COVID shutdowns. It brought people together and gave them something to share with their neighbors. That idea blossomed into another holiday parade this year, and who knows where it may go next. We have so much untapped creativity!

We appreciate the support that Blandin provides to its communities, and I can see wonderful opportunities just waiting in the wings!

John Hallich

John is a long-time resident of western Itasca County. Now in his 80s, John is an ElderCircle client for both the Home Visitor Program and the Assisted Transportation Program. In 2021, Blandin Foundation provided a \$134,000 grant to support operating expenses for ElderCircle and their Home Visitor Program.

This year was another rough one for seniors. Living in a senior apartment in Deer River, when COVID started up, our community center shut down and there's nothing going on. Besides walking down

the hallway to grab mail and meeting someone by chance, that community center was the only place we could get together.

I am thankful for ElderCircle's driving program, though, because without it I'd never get to my medical appointments. Just like those drivers are volunteers, I hope more people in our community make the choice to help their neighbors as much as they can. For me, I don't have anything to give financially, but if I can help

out, I will – giving rides and such. Helping out each other is one way to get through these challenging times.

In the new year, I hope to see this community grow and get COVID-19 under control. If communities like Marcell, Talmoon and Deer River grow and more jobs are created, people, like me, will see the freedom that comes with a rural way of life and want to try it out for themselves.

