While in graduate school, I first was confronted with the reality faced by adults who cannot read. Brad, a 37 year old butcher, a high school graduate, came to the reading clinic. He told me that he wanted a better life, that his lack of skills was holding him back, that he couldn’t leave his neighborhood because he couldn’t read bus destinations. He dreamed about opening his own butcher shop but knew that he would never be able to do so if he could not read. How could he order from suppliers, write up invoices, understand licensing requirements, deal with the Health Department? And he worried that he would be unable to help his newborn son succeed in school.

So he began the slow process of learning to read, starting at the beginning. He did not have a learning disability. He grew up in a household with illiterate parents, no books, no library visits. A quiet child, he slipped unnoticed through school, a shadow in the classroom.

During our six months together, Brad learned to read. Through hard work and determination, he severed the bonds that had confounded him so long. I wish that I could tell you that he opened that dreamed-of butcher shop, but I lost track of him. I do know that he spent off-hours happily exploring his city – riding buses – and that he proudly read books to his baby son. And he voted for the first time.

Clear and convincing research highlights the impact of early and continuing language acquisition on one’s life. We know that the number of words children hear by age three varies by as much as 30 million words depending on a family’s financial situation. The societal and educational implications are sobering. Without purposeful intervention, language-deprived children enter preschool with the odds already stacked against them.

When children start school behind their peers, it is difficult for them to make up lost ground. Children who are not reading on grade level by the end of third grade are more likely to be held back in school and less likely to graduate. School attendance and behavior often become problematic. Imagine spending six hours a day in an environment that highlights your inadequacies and compounds your feelings of anxiety and hopelessness. Who would want to do that?

Reading truly is fundamental. Once we learn to read we read to learn, liberating mind, body, and spirit. And while we often hear about the need to “upgrade the infrastructure” – roads and bridges, power grids, communication networks, and the like – the true infrastructure is in the people. By investing in our youngest citizens, ensuring that they develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that will enable them to have brighter tomorrows, we build a strong foundation and shape their futures as well as our own.
As an educator, I have witnessed the life-altering power of education for children in every demographic. Education is the key to reducing poverty, improving health, building a sustainable planet, and creating understanding. But it takes hard work, resources, and systemic belief in the worth of every child to make that happen.

While we can’t take on the world, we can focus on our corner of it. There are good things happening as regards literacy in West Virginia. With our Birth-to-Three Program, our youngest children are getting much needed support. Our state has been singled out for providing better access to preschool programs and dedicating more dollars to the effort than do most other states. West Virginia has been recognized nationally for a progressive law requiring access to Universal Pre-K for all of our four-year-olds. Our state is one of five to meet all National Institute for Early Education Research Pre-K benchmarks; has been recognized by New America’s Education Policy Program for leading the nation in developing children’s literacy skills; and has received the State Pacesetter Award for its Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. Collaborative efforts involving the Legislature, Governor’s Office, Department of Education, State Board of Education, and other state agencies, school districts, and community and business partners, and foundations like the Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation (TGKVF) and The Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation are paying off.

Through TGKVF-funded initiatives like Born Learning Academy and multiple after-school programs, through robust programs like Read Aloud and Birth-to-Three and Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library, through our schools and public libraries, through the WV Department of Education’s Grade Level Reading initiative, through state agencies’ outreach programs and First Lady Cathy Justice’s Communities in Schools pilot program, through programs funded by the Legislature and federal government and private entities – a lot is going on to positively affect West Virginia’s children.

Much has been accomplished. But there is much more to be done. Education is the most critical investment that we can make. Getting children off to a strong start is essential. But maintaining that momentum and taking action so that all children can lead productive, purposeful lives, is something that each of us needs to support. We can make a difference if we choose to do so.
I always credit my maternal grandmother, Ismay "Mama" Amsterdam, with directly and indirectly instilling in me many of the intrinsic values that make me the person I am today. My generous, loving, hard-working, and supportive Mama only managed to acquire a 4th-grade education while growing up in abject poverty in Guyana, South America. Nevertheless, she instilled in my mom and her siblings the importance of obtaining an education by any means necessary. My mom, Muline Mickle, is a retired educator; formerly with the New York City public school system. She has a master's degree and many additional literacy specialist certifications. My mom and I had to work while attending college to cover our expenses. I was blessed to receive a few scholarships during my undergraduate years; they meant the world to me as I pursued a bachelor's degree at the City University of New York.

Since its founding in 1962, The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation (TGKVF) has made post-secondary education in West Virginia more accessible by providing scholarships throughout the state. To understand the impact of our efforts, we contracted with Midwest Evaluation and Research (MER) in 2016 to conduct an evaluation of the TGKVF Scholarship Program.

From an analysis of TGKVF's existing data and a survey of 203 students who received scholarships from 2002-2017, the following five major impacts emerged:

1) TGKVF's Scholarship Program helps people attend college who would not otherwise have been able to do so (around 25% of scholarship recipients indicate they would not have been able to attend college without TGKVF support).

2) Receiving a TGKVF scholarship correlates with better grades (3.7 GPA compared to 3.1 GPA national average).

3) Receiving a TGKVF scholarship correlates with higher rates of graduation from college (96% graduation rate compared to 59% national average).

4) Upon graduation, TGKVF scholarship recipients have significantly less debt than college graduates who did not receive a TGKVF scholarship (approximately half the debt of the national average).

5) A TGKVF scholarship correlates with higher income after graduation (approximately 20% higher income than peers).

These findings validate the positive effects of our investment of resources in scholarship efforts. They also have potential implications for the management of existing funds, the creation of new funds, and the engagement of past recipients in helping the next generation.

The complete scholarship evaluation report is available at https://tgkvf.org/news-and-publications/publications/
TGKVF currently has 110 scholarship funds. Three hundred and seventy-three scholarships, totaling $768,297, were awarded in 2017 from these funds. We welcome donors who would like to add to existing scholarship funds or invest at least $20,000 to begin a new fund.

Our scholarship application is available online at www.tgkvf.org/scholarships and the annual application period is from November 1 to January 15. A team of 80 volunteers, who serve on 12 scholarship committees, review applications and recommend awardees by April. TGKVF scholarship awards are made in August and range between $500 and $10,000. Award checks are mailed to the recipients’ institutions directly.

The Foundation also administers scholarship funds for various colleges and universities. The respective college/university selects the recipients of these scholarships.

- Scholarship Application Period is November–January 15
- Available online at www.tgkvf.org
- Approximately $800,000 will be available to be awarded
- Contact Susan Hoover, Scholarship Program Officer, for more information: 304.346.3620 or shoover@tgkvf.org

2017-18 Scholarship Winners
**WHO:** Teachers in their first, second, or third year of teaching K-5th grade at any public elementary school in Lincoln, Boone, Clay, Fayette, Kanawha, or Putnam counties.

**WHAT:** A free bi-monthly dinner with other new teachers and a retired teacher with more than 35 years of classroom experience to share opportunities, challenges, best practices, lessons learned, and empathy

**WHERE:** Panera Bread at the Town Center Mall and other dinner locations TBD

**WHEN:** Every other Thursday beginning in early October from 4-5pm

**WHY:** To give new teachers an opportunity to share successes and challenges with other new teachers; to benefit from the advice and wisdom of an experienced teacher; to build a peer network that will assist with support and retention of new teachers

To learn more or sign up for this program, please contact Ms. Becca Revercomb at beccarev@gmail.com.

Supported by The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation
Foundation Announces 2018 Third Quarter Discretionary Grants

Charleston, WV- The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation (TGKVF) Board of Trustees approved the distribution of 15 grants totaling $522,289.

The loss of two family members, multiple moves, senior year, and an instinct to help care for your younger sisters are more trauma than any young child should face. Applying and attending college seem like a distant dream. Even if accepted how would you play for it and who would care your sisters? This was the reality for Sarah, a recent graduate of Clay County High School and a student enrolled in Mission West Virginia’s Bridge program. Through the Bridge program, which provides one-on-one mentorship to foster youth, Sarah was able to improve her grades, complete financial aid forms, and become excited about the possibility of furthering her education. Sarah was ultimately accepted by three colleges and will begin attending a state university in the fall.

TGKVF awarded one field-of-interest and eight responsive grants totaling $332,245 to Basic Needs and Arts & Culture programs and six grants totaling $190,044 in the Foundation’s proactive priority areas of Education, Health, and Community Economic Development (CED).

**Mission West Virginia-The Bridge: $36,635 (Education)**

Now in the project’s fourth year, Mission West Virginia strives to create opportunities and support foster youth who are pursuing their dreams and becoming productive members of our community. To accomplish this, the organization collaborates with Clay County Schools in the following ways: educational advocacy; academic coaching; enrichment opportunities; post-secondary education planning; and scholarships. Funding will support staffing, incentives, and college visits.

**Pro Kids, Inc.-Charleston Afterschool Learning and Adventures: $40,347 (Education)**

This project will support additional afterschool program sites throughout Charleston. This new collaborative effort between Kanawha County Schools and three established afterschool programs including Bob Burdette Center, Step by Step, and Pro-Kids, will help provide academic support to children on the East End and West Side of Charleston. Funds will be used for staffing and supplies.

**Just for Kids, Inc.-Fayette Initiative-Changing the Conversation about Sexual Abuse of Children: $16,170 (Health)**

This project will establish a collaborative group of organizations in Fayette County for the purposes of preventing sexual abuse of children and implementing prevention programming. This programming follows the recommendations of the WV State Task Force on the Prevention for Sexual Abuse of Children and the mandates of current state laws.

"The loss of two family members, multiple moves, senior year, and an instinct to help care for your younger sisters are more trauma than any young child should face. College and the future would be the furthest thing from your mind. This was the reality for Sarah*, a recent graduate of Clay County High School and Bridge student.”

-Mission WV Staff

“This intelligent young man reminds us how we are family to him daily, because we are. All kids can do great, given the opportunity to succeed.”

- (Speaking of “K”)

Staff Donicia Yates

“I know that working together, listening to each other and respecting each other’s perspective will give Fayette County the means necessary to significantly change the conversation about child sexual abuse.”

-Staff at Just for Kids, Inc.
Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine- Sustainable Care Coordination for High Risk Diabetes Patients: $36,392 (Health)

This second year project, is a collaboration with Cabin Creek Health Systems. It supports care coordination of high risk diabetes patients with the help of Community Health Workers. The project will improve outcomes, reduce health care costs, and establish sustained employment for community health workers. Funding will support the care coordinators and their outreach efforts.

Children’s Therapy Clinic, Inc.- Comprehensive Therapeutic Services: $35,500 (Health)

In this fourth year project, Children’s Therapy Clinic will provide comprehensive therapy services for children with special needs who have insufficient insurance coverage and/or no income. The project will also include complementary therapy services like weekly yoga classes.

Rivers to Ridges Heritage Trail, Inc.- Rivers to Ridges Heritage Trail Marketing and Community Economic Development Initiative: $25,000 (CED)

This new project will utilize Rivers to Ridges Heritage Trail as a catalyst to improve the economy in western Kanawha and northern Putnam Counties by promoting the region as a destination for tourists and bolstering local businesses along the Heritage Trail.

West Virginia University Foundation, Inc.- Children’s Vision Rehabilitation Program (CVRP): $136,955 (Field-of-Interest)

CVRP/SenseAbilities (SA) ensures children with visual impairments, including those with CVI, blindness, and low vision, receive services from knowledgeable providers. Interventions, equipment, and devices are diverse. Children with visual impairment represent less than one percent of the population. Families and providers struggle to acquire information, identify resources, and gain support. Funding will support equipment, supplies, and staffing costs.

Kanawha Valley Collective, Inc.- Centralized Point of Entry and Housing Stabilization: $75,000 (Basic Needs)

The Kanawha Valley Collective (KVC) is the local Continuum of Care, a collaborative network of providers serving Kanawha, Putnam, Clay, and Boone Counties. This project will reduce and prevent homelessness by providing emergency shelter, permanent housing, and job skills to our community’s most vulnerable citizens.
**Covenant House, Inc.- Improving Health and Quality of Life for the homelessness and low-income: $70,950 (Basic Needs)**

Covenant House, Manna Meal Inc. (MMI), and Roark-Sullivan Lifeway Center (RSLWC) are collaborating to fight hunger, homelessness, and poverty in Kanawha County. The three organizations serve an estimated 90 percent of the homeless population in the county.

**YWCA Resolve Abuse Program-YWCA Resolve Family Abuse Program: $22,250 (Basic Needs)**

The Resolve victim and shelter services coordinator and advocates assist domestic violence victims by providing basic needs such as food, clothing, and safe, secure shelter. The coordinator also provides case management, referrals, and on-site classes which empower survivors to build safer, more secure futures for themselves and their children.

**Daymark, Inc.- Patchwork: $ 16,500 (Basic Needs)**

The Patchwork program provides food, clothing, counseling, transportation, and other support to youth (ages 12 - 21) who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Any young person can call or come to Patchwork at any time day or night and receive services.

**Charleston Civic Chorus-The Charleston Civic Chorus 2018 Spring Concert, FestivALL concert, Winter Concert, and two performances on New Year's Eve for Charleston’s Good Night festivities: $1,000 (Arts & Culture)**

This project includes five concerts presented by the Charleston Civic Chorus during the calendar year. It encompasses a broad range of choral works in combination with collaborating musicians for the Winter Concert.

**West Virginia Youth Symphony-Outreach through the Performing Arts-Dance, Voice, & Orchestral Music!: $17,000 (Arts & Culture)**

This project will fund a collaborative ballet production of Peter Pan at the Clay Center in February 2019, showcasing over 150 young dancers, singers, and musicians. It will promote arts education primarily in Putnam, Clay, and Kanawha counties, leading to more ballet and violin class instruction in the Clendenin area.

“I would still be on the streets and living from meal to meal without their help. They are my family.”
- Colt, a 63-year-old Kanawha County resident.

“I would recommend Resolve to anyone struggling with domestic abuse. The staff is very knowledgeable and will partner you with all the right resources to help.”
- Ruby, Sojourner's resident

“I learned that I have to set myself free; because I’m not responsible for other people even though I love them. I know more about me since being at Patchwork; even when I wanted to be home instead.”
- Sally, a 15-year-old female, was a resident at Patchwork.

“I was so pleased to hear from many excited audience members expressing their enjoyment of the program. They spoke of the interesting and engaging program as well as the sound of the chorus.”
- Artistic Director and Conductor, Dr. Dirk Johnson

“Well, it's fun to play music. I feel it has given me more confidence in myself. I like playing for my friends, especially when they ask me to play more!”
- 11-year-old Daniel Vigliotti, part of Clendenin String Program
West Virginia Music Hall of Fame, Inc.-West Virginia Music Hall of Fame’s (WVMHoF) Music Career Counseling Project and Traveling Museum: $11,000 (Arts & Culture)

The WVMHoF’s Music Career Counseling program (MCCP) introduces 9th graders to performing and non-performing career opportunities in the music industry. The funds will be used towards guest artist stipends and staff expenses for the traveling museum in Boone, Fayette, and Putnam counties.

Appalachian Children’s Chorus-Financial Assistance: $5,000 (Arts & Culture)

This funding will help provide children with the opportunity to join the Appalachian Children’s Chorus by covering 90 percent of the tuition and uniform costs for those families in Kanawha, Lincoln, and Putnam counties who qualify. Choristers benefit from artistic and character development. They also develop team building, communication, and leadership skills.

“Before you visited our school, I thought I would have to leave the state to work in music. I had no idea these jobs and opportunities were available in West Virginia!”
- Student, Independence Middle School

“I was a part of ACC for over 6 years, and my time there was pivotal in shaping who I am now as an adult.”
- Katie Johansson (now 25 years old)

Susan Hoover, Scholarship Program Officer, just celebrated her 20th anniversary of working at The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation. She started with the Foundation in September 1998 as a receptionist and was quickly promoted to Scholarship Coordinator in January 1999. During her time working within the scholarship program, Susan has helped more than 4,000 West Virginia students attend college!

Before joining the Foundation, Susan worked in research and banking. She is a native of Charleston and graduated from Charleston High School before attending West Virginia University. Susan is very family-oriented. She and her husband together have five children and nine grandchildren. Through her work at the Foundation, Susan channels her passion for youth by helping students apply for scholarships and pursue their post-secondary ambitions.

Thank you for your dedicated service to TGKVF and for helping to make our communities better, stronger, and more educated for the last 20 years!
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