Robert L. Brown’s Hometown Legacy

Great things are happening in the city of Sharpsburg! Thanks to a bequest from lifelong resident Robert L. Brown, this small city in Bath County is being transformed.

Robert, whose family has lived in Sharpsburg for many generations, left an incredibly generous gift through his estate to establish the R. L. Brown Foundation. Blue Grass Community Foundation has been entrusted to carry out Robert’s wishes to improve the quality of life for the residents of his hometown.

Sharpsburg is certainly familiar with the Brown Family, as Robert’s grandfather Charles Brown established the Brown General Store on Main Street in 1874. For almost 150 years, the Brown General Store has been, and continues to be, the heart of downtown Sharpsburg.

Born in Sharpsburg in 1933, Robert attended the local elementary and high school, then earned a degree in business administration from the University of Kentucky in 1954. After he spent two years stationed in France as a U.S. Army medic, he returned to the States to embark on a 47-year career with Woolworth’s, frequently traveling between Cincinnati, Louisville and Detroit.

After Woolworth’s closed in the late 1990s, Robert returned to Sharpsburg permanently and managed the Brown General Store with his sister, Geneva. He followed family tradition and took pride in his business acumen and financial savvy.

“He was brilliant at investing,” said Rob Lane, friend and executor of Robert’s estate. Rob Lane has worked closely with the Community Foundation to ensure the Browns’ family legacy lives on for generations.

“Mr. Brown’s gift has planted the seeds for the perpetual funding of groundbreaking projects in Sharpsburg,” said Lane.

The updates Sharpsburg continues to see are significant. To date, Robert’s bequest has completely refurbished the downtown Sharpsburg playground and has extended the summer hours and programs at the Sharpsburg Branch of the Bath County Memorial Library. The gift has made it possible for local youth to attend the Bath County 4-H Summer Camp and has brought Lexington Children’s Theatre and the International Book Project to town for free summer camp workshops.

The elementary and high school Robert once attended, the same in which Geneva taught hundreds of Sharpsburg children — including Rob Lane — is now the Sharpsburg Community Center. Robert’s gift made possible considerable improvements to the building the Brown family loved so much. Likewise, a new chapel at the Crown Hill Cemetery on Main Street has been constructed.

And that’s just the beginning.

Blue Grass Community Foundation is partnering with the University of Kentucky to open and staff the Sharpsburg Design Studio, which will be located on-site in Sharpsburg. The studio will collaborate with residents to generate ideas and identify key priorities to further revitalize the downtown area, improve the local park, provide youth programs, and enhance the quality of life in Sharpsburg for everyone.

“Robert’s legacy is a testament to his love for his community,” said Lisa Adkins, president and CEO of the Community Foundation. “We are so honored to be entrusted with that legacy, ensuring that charitable aspirations for Sharpsburg are realized.”

To learn how you can leave a meaningful legacy for your community, contact Halee Cunningham, General Counsel and Director/Planned Giving, at halee@bgcf.org or 859.225.3343.
DIGITAL ACCESS PROJECT COALITION ANNOUNCES
FIRST EFFORT IN KENTUCKY TO DIGITIZE HISTORICAL RECORDS OF ENSLAVED PEOPLE

More than 60,000 pages of Fayette County’s historical property records containing information about enslaved people from the late 1700s through 1865 will soon be available to the public online thanks to a partnership between the Fayette County Clerk, University of Kentucky’s Commonwealth Institute of Black Studies, the Lexington Black Prosperity Initiative, Blue Grass Community Foundation and its Knight Foundation Donor Advised Charitable Fund.

The Fayette County Clerk began digitizing documents during the 1990s, but the books of historical property records remained solely on paper, including transactions detailing names of individuals sold and purchased as slaves, mortgages naming enslaved people as collateral, and probate documents with names of enslaved people listed as part of the deceased’s estate. Generations of their descendants have been searching for biographical information to piece together their family histories, but these clues have only been accessible by viewing the paper records in person at the Fayette County Clerk’s Office.

Bringing these documents online and into a searchable database will take human power, specialized equipment, historical expertise, and funding. Thanks to the Digital Access Project partnership, Fayette County will be the first county in Kentucky to digitize its historical property records dating back to the late 1700s.

Downtown Lexington was the site of one of the largest slave markets in the southeastern United States. Thousands of transactions recorded in Fayette County contained the names of large segments of the enslaved population prior to emancipation and the official end of slavery on December 6, 1865. In the late 1890s, newspapers across the country contained “information wanted” ads placed by formerly enslaved people looking for family members who had been sold and separated from them in Lexington. Publishing Fayette County’s historical property records online will help answer these questions that still linger for many Black families today.

A University of Kentucky team of scholars, including members from UK Libraries, the history department, the Commonwealth Institute for Black Studies and the law school, will expand on the Digital Access Project by providing transcription of these complex handwritten property records from the early days of Kentucky statehood through the Era of Emancipation in the 1860s. Following that stage of the project, community programming and a digital humanities project will be designed to expand accessibility and increase context and understanding for the community.

To kickoff the Digital Access Project, Knight Foundation Donor Advised Charitable Fund at BGCF provided $50,000, Blue Grass Community Foundation provided $25,000 and the Lexington Black Prosperity Initiative provided $10,000.

Learn more about the Lexington Black Prosperity Initiative at bgcf.org/racialequity. Donate to support the Digital Access Project at: bgcf.givingfuel.com/DAP.

"A significant part of our legacy as African Americans is memory keeping. The Digital Access Project is part of a long tradition of memory keeping, community curation and intentional preservation." — Dr. Vanessa Holden, Director, Central Kentucky Slavery Initiative and Associate Professor of History and African American & Africana Studies, University of Kentucky
AppHarvest and Blue Grass Community Foundation began their partnership in 2021 through Appalachia Rises, a collaborative flood-relief effort for Eastern Kentucky. The partnership between BGCF and AppHarvest deepened when AppHarvest established a corporate charitable foundation at the Community Foundation. Now, AppHarvest is, yet again, investing in Eastern Kentucky – and Central Appalachia – only this time, in its school systems.

Launched in 2018, the AppHarvest AgTech Education program introduces high school students to controlled environment agriculture and provides them with STEM-based entrepreneurial experience through high-tech farm classrooms.

Partnering with schools to provide complementary ag-tech education programming, the AppHarvest Foundation helps launch farm classrooms housed in shipping containers retrofitted with hydroponic growing systems. Student farmers get experience in growing up to 5,000 plants at a time from seed germination through harvest, as well as gaining an understanding of modern farming as a business.

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“The AppHarvest Foundation AgTech Education Program is a key element in fostering interest in high-tech indoor farming as we work to create an ag-tech ecosystem in Appalachia,” said Amy Samples, AppHarvest’s VP of community outreach.

“Early on, our team knew we wanted to invest in the region to grow the farmers of tomorrow, building on the many existing and outstanding community and education programs focused on creating a more resilient Appalachian economy. The program supported by the AppHarvest Foundation introduces new pathways for students who may not have considered a career in agriculture.”

There are currently 10 AgTech Education Program partner locations throughout the state, and the student farmers participating in the program harvest the produced greens, which are typically used in school cafeterias, donated to local food banks, or sold to local restaurants by student ag-tech entrepreneurs.

To learn more about the AppHarvest Foundation, visit appharvestfoundation.org.

To learn more about establishing your business’ charitable foundation at BGCF, contact Lisa Adkins, President/CEO, at ladkins@bgcf.org.
MURRY FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP

College dreams made real for first-generation students

Two first-generation college students are fulfilling their dream of furthering their education, thanks to the newly established Murry Foundation Scholarship.

Wes Murry, a founder of the famous Castle & Key Distillery, mentor to numerous startups and co-chair of BGCF’s Fund for Greater Lexington, is well versed in charitable giving. As lead trustee of the Murry Foundation, Wes established the Murry Foundation Scholarship in 2021 to provide scholarships to first-generation college students with financial need from Fayette County, Kentucky (Wes’s home today), and Lancaster County, Pennsylvania (where Wes grew up).

The scholarship provides a yearly award of $5,000, renewable for four years of undergraduate study. It also provides an incentive to maintain outstanding grades by providing an additional award of $2,500 to recipients who earn a cumulative GPA of 3.5.

The scholarship has had a profound impact on its first two recipients, Amerie Wright and Adolfo Ybarra. Both are attending their first semester of college – Amerie at Pennsylvania College of Health Sciences and Adolfo at the University of Kentucky.

Amerie always knew she wanted to be a nurse. She also knew it wouldn’t be easy. But she was encouraged by her mother’s example. When Amerie was 10 years old, her mother – a single mom – went back to school and earned a degree in nursing. Amerie watched with admiration as her mother navigated financial aid forms and studied late into the night, all while running a household and caring for her children.

“I knew that taking care of people was something I loved doing,” said Amerie. “I remember going with my mom to work and watching her care for people. That’s what inspired me to pursue my own career in nursing.”

Sadly, several years ago, Amerie’s mother suffered debilitating health difficulties and is no longer able to work. In high school, Amerie worked a part-time job to help with household expenses, meaning there was never extra money to save for college. Her dreams of a nursing career were completely dependent on financial aid and scholarships.

“I have big goals and ambitions,” said Amerie, who is considering a career in forensic nursing, “but I obviously need assistance getting there, and the Murry Foundation Scholarship has helped make it possible!”

Adolfo Ybarra also looked to his family for inspiration. Adolfo is the first person in his extended family to attend college – or even to consider the possibility. Adolfo’s father never had the opportunity, as he grew up in a poor village in Mexico and had to leave school at age 12 to help provide for his family. Adolfo’s father encouraged him to work hard in school and to value his education, and Adolfo took the advice to heart.

“My parents have always had very high hopes for me,” said Adolfo. “I want to live up to those expectations.”

Yet to most of his extended family, college and scholarships seemed like impossible dreams, akin to winning the Powerball.

“This scholarship not only fueled the fire of my dream, but it also inspired the generation around me to consider furthering their education,” said Adolfo. “Ever since I got the news I received the Murry Foundation Scholarship, all of my family have asked me for advice about applying for college or help with scholarships.”

Adolfo is studying computer science and is especially interested in coding.

Blue Grass Community Foundation is where people go to give to enhance the quality of life, not only in Central and Appalachia Kentucky but in the areas that matter to our neighbors. We value giving deserving students the opportunity to pursue their dreams, and if you are interested in creating a scholarship of your own, now is the perfect time to reach out!

Donors who establish scholarship funds at Blue Grass Community Foundation may specify criteria, such as academic achievement, financial need, geographic location, college selection, community involvement, leadership, field of study, and career plans. We design the application and oversee an independent committee to evaluate applications and choose recipients. Donors may serve on the selection committee and be part of the interview process, if they wish.

To learn more, contact Scott Fitzpatrick, Vice President/Advancement at sfitzpatrick@bgcf.org or 859.225.3343.
2022 Scholarship Recipients

Jennifer Leigh Soper Scholarship:
- Samantha Johnson, Penboke, MA
- Joann McEvoy Frazer Vocal Achievement Award Scholarship
- Callista Case, Lexington
- Johns and Maude Price Scholarship:
- Kaba Kluba, Lexington
- John G. Heber Scholarship:
- Sara Anderlech, Lexington
- Madison Arin Nunn, Lexington
- John T. and Willis Hedges Education Scholarship:
- Sadie Darby, Carlisle
- Madalene Evans, Paris
- Kevin J. Crowe Memorial Scholarship:
- Kathryn Golden, Somerset
- Ashlyn McDonald, Somerset
- King-Barton Scholarship:
- Zachary McComas, Cynthiana
- Lewis E. Owens Scholarship:
- Brianna Ealy, Stanton
- Anna Watters, Irvine
- Lewis Sexton Scholarship:
- Mason Roach, Mount Washington
- Trinity Smith, Shepherdsville
- William Walker, LaGrange
- Logan Thomas Family Memorial Scholarship:
- Logan Bottoms, Beattyville
- Hanna Campbell, Beattyville
- Loren Richords Elder Care Scholarship:
- Kaylee Lane, Stanton
- Stephanie Mays, Salyersville
- LT. Richard Caswell Saufley/George E. Saufley II Scholarship:
- Robert Bowman III, Crab Orchard
- MacLellan Education Scholarship:
- Jad Ramadan, Kentwood, MI
- Magoffin County Scholarship:
- Case Adkins, Salyersville
- Carlee Arnett, Salyersville
- Emily Fletcher, Salyersville
- Victoria Hall, Salyersville
- Ryan Holdrery, Salyersville
- Emily Howard, Salyersville
- Mattie Howards, Salyersville
- Matthew McCarty, Salyersville
- Louryn Whitaker, Salyersville
- Margaret Hall Alumnae Association Scholarship:
- Madelyne Burt, Charleston, SC
- Kim Novosel, Danville
- Monica Combs Memorial Scholarship:
- Kristen Bailey, Versailles
- Murry Foundation Scholarship:
- Amina Wright, Lancaster, PA
- Stefano Yoana, Lexington
- Nate Morris Prize for Eastern High School:
- Gabrielle Taylor, Louisville
- R.L. Brown Foundation Scholarship:
- Morgan Crouch, Sharpsburg
- Morgan Howard, Owingsville
- Elizabeth Willoughby, Owingsville
- Robert Marion and Mel Keolker Stewart Scholarship:
- Bryn Metcalf, Salem, IL
- Rosalind Pittenger Scholarship:
- Madalene Evans, Paris
- McKenzia McGraw, Cynthiana
- Stephen L. Keller Scholarship:
- Naomi Adams, Whitesburg
- Steven G. Todd Memorial Scholarship:
- Brooklyn Puckett, Beattyville
- Stewart Family Scholarship:
- Gracie Bates, Ashland
- Natalie Bevlin, Ashland
- Kaitlyn Crecia, Jamestown
- William Dillon, Ironton, OH
- Dylan Jones, Flatwoods
- Lylzi Justice, Ashland
- Kuba Kluba, Lexington
- Emily Marion, Argyle
- Owen Marcum, Ashland
- Lydia Pack, Ironton, OH
- Regan Rouss, Ironton, OH
- Emma Ruark, Greenup
- Jacob Sloan, Ironton, OH
- Layney Stanley, Ashland
- Cole Villars, Ashland
- Joshua Williams, Greenup
- Cole Williamson, Cattletsburg
- Drew Williamson, Cattletsburg
- Thomas B. Bright, Jr. Scholarship:
- Alexis Hall, Irvine
- Gabriel Hall, Irvine
- Makenna Lantham, Union
- Thomas D. Urstom Scholarship:
- Zoe McComas, Cynthiana
- Vengu Family Scholarship:
- Madison Dunaway, Sadieville
- Viola Phillips Scholarship:
- Savannah Wright, Mims Roberts
- W.O. Davis Scholarship:
- Dylan Duncan, Versailles
- Wilma Pigg Poynter Scholarship for EKU:
- Taylor Barnes, London
- Jeffrey Brown, E. Bernstadt
- Hayden Durham, London
- Bradford Jackson, London
- Allison Vaughn, London
- Wilma Pigg Poynter Scholarship for Union College:
- Zachary Adams, Corbin
- Hannah Baker, Corbin
- Brittany Beavers, Corbin
- Grace Jenks, London
- Kortlyn Mikis, Corbin
- Mohita Patel, Corbin
Dolly Parton is known for three things: her music, her big hair, and her big heart for early literacy! But the latter is why the country artist and humanitarian’s Imagination Library has continued to grow throughout the country.

Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library allows children from birth to age 5 to receive a free age-appropriate book each month, mailed directly to their family’s home regardless of the family’s income. With the support of a dollar-to-dollar match from Kentucky State Department of Education, this program is expanding statewide with the goal of reaching children in each of Kentucky’s 120 counties.

To leverage this state funding, Blue Grass Community Foundation has committed more than $100,000 in grant funding to support the program in the 19 counties it serves in Central and Eastern Kentucky. The funding is made possible through a collective effort from different funds at BGCF, including the McAdam Early Childhood & Literacy Fund, Chris Stapleton’s Outlaw State of Kind Hometown Fund, Clark County Community Foundation, the Franklin, Harrison, Madison and Rowan County community funds, and an anonymous fund.

As more children enroll, the nonprofits that administer the program locally must continue to raise funds (with the state match, the annual cost of the program is $12.50 per child), so BGCF has committed grant funding over the next three years to keep momentum going and ensure every child has the opportunity to grow their own library and their imagination!

“We are so excited to partner with our fundholders to provide the gift of books and ignite the love of reading in children in the communities we serve,” said Lisa Adkins, president/CEO of BGCF. “Research shows increasing a child’s access to books can boost a child’s early literacy skills and school readiness. We are pleased to make an investment that will positively impact thousands of children in Central and Eastern Kentucky.”

If you are interested in learning more about supporting the Dolly Parton Imagination Library in a local community or enrolling your child or grandchild to receive books, please contact BGCF Director of Grants + Scholarships Kristen Tidwell at kristen@bgcf.org.
HOMETOWN LEGACY

Blue Grass Community Foundation hosts a network of endowed community funds in Clark, Franklin, Fayette, Harrison, Madison, Magoffin, Rowan and Woodford counties, each seeking to improve the quality of life in its geography. In partnership with local leaders, these funds work to increase charitable giving and build local charitable resources to impact their communities’ greatest needs and opportunities.

Supporting your home county’s community fund is a way to give back to the community that has provided you with special memories, friendships and opportunities. Visit bgcf.org/community-funds to learn more about our community funds, or contact Jane Higgins, director of community advancement, at janehiggins@bgcf.org to customize a giving plan, either through a one-time gift, a multi-year pledge or through your estate.

Thanks to the Generous Donors to the Community Fund Annual Campaign!

$200,000 RAISED
for the Clark County Community Foundation, and the Franklin, Harrison, Madison, Rowan and Woodford community funds!

$10,100,466 GRAND TOTAL
in these endowed community funds!

These donations help fund impactful projects and collaborations to provide much needed community improvements, such as

- Downtown development,
- Paved walking and biking trails, and
- Accessible playground equipment in public parks.

As one Rowan County resident said, “Our daughter has Down syndrome. Walking to our local park to play on the playground equipment is one of our most treasured pastimes. Thanks to this project, she can play on every piece of equipment. What this means to our family, and to our greater community, is immeasurable.”

WHY I GIVE:

“The Franklin County Community Fund provides our community with an opportunity to make transformative change by collectively organizing small and large donors across the county. I’m thankful to the leaders and donors who established and funded the Franklin County Community Fund! Thanks to their support, the fund will address big-ticket community concerns and invest in our community for generations to come.”

— René True, annual giver to the Franklin County Community Fund Annual Campaign
FROM LISA ADKINS

Our President’s Letter

This issue of BGCFyi is all about making dreams come true:

- Dreams of a donor to establish his charitable legacy
- Dreams of a more racially equitable and prosperous tomorrow
- Dreams of a small, rural community to revitalize its downtown
- Dreams of a college education and better future
- Dreams of the gift of literacy for children across Kentucky

Whatever your charitable dream is, the team at Blue Grass Community Foundation is here to help you make it real.

Fall is here, so now is the time to ramp up year-end charitable planning. Our professional staff offers deep expertise, including three attorneys and two CPAs, so you can count on sound guidance to complement the advice of your own professional advisors. We are always happy to work alongside them as a team to ensure you receive the most meaningful results. To schedule a meeting, just give me a call.

Lisa Ashner Adkins, J.D.
President/CEO
859.225.3343

P.S. — Mark your calendars for the 12th annual GoodGiving Challenge, launching Tuesday, November 29 at 9am!