

Introduction: As we celebrate 70 years of service in Jackson County, the Jackson Community Foundation (JCF) established the Carter Wickwire Philanthropy Award in 2018. The criteria were aligned with the Community Foundation Philanthropy Award established by the Council of Michigan Foundations (CMF) and the Michigan Nonprofit Association (MNA) to accomplish two things; first to honor a local philanthropist locally and second, to recognize their contribution to Michigan's philanthropic success by forwarding their nomination to CMF.

The Carter and Wickwire families played a very important role in our history. JCF was founded in 1948 with two very special gifts. During World War II, the families of Lt. John L. Carter and Pfc. John Gilbert Wickwire donated proceeds from life insurance policies that were purchased in the name of their sons, both of whom lost their lives in battle. The Jackson War Chest accepted the insurance contribution, plus additional gifts added by each family. When discussion of starting a community foundation began, a total of \$20,000 was transferred to begin a permanent endowment for Jackson County.

On February 22, 2018, the JCF Board of Trustees unanimously nominated Carlene Walz Lefere to be the inaugural recipient of Carter Wickwire Philanthropy Award and further to be nominated for the Community Foundation Philanthropy Award. As you will see in the following narrative, Carlene exemplifies the perfect nominee who epitomizes service as a volunteer, an emeritus trustee, and a donor who has helped JCF's growth over the course of many years.

Commitment – Carlene joined the JCF Board of Trustees in 2002. She served as Chair of the Board Development Committee and began her service as Board Chair in January of 2009. As you will learn in the Leadership category, Carlene's commitment to JCF grew as she wholeheartedly embraced the needs of the organization through exciting and tumultuous times.

Leadership – In July of 2009, just six months after Carlene became the Board Chair, the CEO was released from service and a CEO Search Committee was formed. Carlene led the way and the Board hired a new CEO in January of 2010. After six months of employment, the Board, again led by Carlene, recognized the new CEO was not a good fit. They made the hard decision to terminate the CEO and begin the process again. Carlene opted to take a leave of absence from the Board and become the fulltime interim CEO for a token salary between July 2010 and March 1, 2011, while the search was conducted. Carlene faced more challenges as JCF lost key members of its staff during this time. Despite only retaining one original staff member, she made sure that all Foundation business was conducted in a thorough and timely manner. In fact, she hired an employee who remains one of JCF's key staff members today.

Impact – The Honorable Carlene Walz Lefere is a Jackson County native. Dedicated to community service, she served as a District Court Judge for 12 years. Prior to her time on the bench, she served as a practicing attorney in Jackson. Judge Lefere was the first female to serve on the district court bench in Jackson County.

Currently, Carlene is an Emeritus Trustee for JCF, a Board Director for the College and Career Access Center, and a member of the Legal Services of South Central Michigan, Jackson Board of Directors. She also participates in 100 Women who Care and serves on the Cascade Falls Champion Committee as well as the Baker Tea Committee.

In Carlene's own words describing why she decided to start a Donor Advised Fund with JCF, she describes the impact that can happen when an investment is made in the community. *"When I joined the Jackson Community Foundation Board in 2002, one of the things I learned very quickly was about the enduring nature of a foundation. At JCF we say "for good forever". My personal reaction to that information was to start an endowment fund, named for my children, The Walz Family Fund. Although the amount was nominal, I knew that over time, the fund would grow and that my children and grandchildren would be given the opportunity to make decisions about what community projects the Fund could support with its earnings for as long as there are descendants to act. After that the Fund still goes on under the direction of the Foundation Board. How great is that? A gift to the Foundation where the donor can participate in the Fund's activity and in addition be assured that the potential for giving lives on.*

I was taught early in my life about the importance of philanthropy and it has been fun for me to pass on the same message to my granddaughters, the youngest of whom have been members of JCF Youth Advisory Committee. The Jackson Community Foundation offers the possibility of giving of the highest order whether ones gives time or treasure....for good forever."

Creativity & Advocacy – Carlene was a pivotal advocate on the JCF board when they decided to make a difference in the post-secondary success of our local students. In 2006, inspired by Kalamazoo's Promise, JCF announced a localized version called the Jackson Legacy Program, making a promise to Jackson County students to help pay for college. In return, the Jackson community showed its commitment for education and economic growth through its support of building both an endowment called the Jackson Legacy Scholarship and the Jackson Legacy Program, a supportive program to assist students and their parents in applying for the college, financial aid, and scholarships.

In 2008 the JCF began the Legacy Program Access Center, now known as the College and Career Access Center (CCAC). We were able to secure a location inside our local mall, providing accessibility to students and their parents. It was developed as a 509 (A) (3) (B) Type 2 Supporting Organization of JCF with the idea of supporting the Legacy Scholarship available to all Jackson County graduating seniors planning to attend local post-secondary institution. The start-up funds for this effort came from JCF, the three main Institutes of Higher Education (IHE) in Jackson County (JCC, Baker, and SAU), and smaller grants. As a supporting organization 51% of the Directors were mandated to be represented by current Trustees of JCF. Again Carlene stepped up to the plate and made the commitment to serve. Even now as the CCAC has become a separate 501(c) 3, she continues to serve on the CCAC's board of directors.

Collaboration – Carlene's heart is focused on what is important for the community. She is an active member of the Jackson Women for Equity Committee. She is a past recipient of the

ATHENA Award which honors individuals who strive toward the highest levels of personal and professional accomplishment, who excel in their chosen field, devote time and energy to their community in a meaningful way, and forge paths of leadership for women to follow.

When the current CEO of JCF was formally hired, Carlene was the first to step forward to mentor her. She continues to share her knowledge of the community by being a key connector when the CEO is looking for someone to introduce her to potential donors and advocates.

When the community is in need for a team of champions to lead an effort, Carlene's name is always brought to mind. Most recently in 2016, Jackson County Commission sought help to renovate The Cascades, one of Jackson's most spectacular attractions. It is an illuminated, colorful, man-made waterfall located within the boundaries of the Sparks Foundation County Park, built in the spring of 1930. They sought to build a Champion Team to lead the charge to raise dollars to renovate the falls, and Carlene was promptly chosen. Once again, she willingly stepped up.

Conclusion: When the Board thought about who should receive this inaugural award, Carlene's name immediately rose to the top. It would be impossible to cover all of the achievements Carlene has made over the years. Her spirit of sharing her time, talents, and treasure has set a high standard for future nominees to receive the Carter Wickwire Philanthropy Award.