

# Goodnews

February 2011

For Good. For Arkansas. For Ever.

## Ft. Smith Symphony Thrives, Supports Economic Development

“For the last six or seven years, pretty much every concert has sold out. We have a waiting list for tickets.”

John Jeter isn't talking about rock concerts. He's talking about the symphony. While the economic downturn has some orchestras across the nation playing their swan song, the Fort Smith Symphony, Arkansas's oldest professional orchestra, is thriving.

“A lot of it has to do with what happens on stage,” explained Jeter, the symphony's music director. “The musicians really want to work their hardest to make the performances

really special. It's okay for them to go out of their comfort zone and play to the utmost, and the audience really responds to that.” Too, Jeter emphasized that although orchestral music can be perceived as stuffy or elite, the Fort Smith Symphony goes out of its way to make people of all backgrounds feel welcome. “People know that it's inviting. You can dress up, or you can be informal.”

And as the performers and audiences are swept up in the moment, the symphony's growing endowment provides for the future. Established in 1992, **the Fort Smith Symphony Association Endowment at Arkansas Community Foundation** was built by donors who wanted to keep the encores coming. “We use the interest from that endowment for general operating expenses, and it's very, very helpful,” Jeter explained.

Arts organizations frequently lose out when tough economic times call attention to immediate needs like hunger and homelessness, but Jeter argues that supporting the arts is actually a way to support the overall economy of a region. “We're getting more and more involved in economic development. There's a huge correlation between the arts and economic development, in terms of attracting businesses from manufacturing to the medical field,” he noted. “It boils down to a quality of life issue. Even if you're not interested in the arts, they're a good indicator of how well a community is doing.”

One way the Fort Smith Symphony is doing its part to contribute is by drawing national attention to the Arkansas arts scene. This spring, the symphony will record its third CD on the Naxos music label, one of the largest publishers of classical music recordings in the world. The three-CD collection features the first ever recording of all five symphonies by William Grant Still, an Arkansas-raised African-American composer renowned in the classical music world. “It's very rare for an orchestra our size to be recording nationally,” Jeter said. “These recordings are important to Arkansas heritage.”



John Jeter

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# Aspire Arkansas Report Will Help ARCF Target Efforts

Better information leads to better solutions. That's why Arkansas Community Foundation has teamed with the University of Arkansas at Little Rock to produce Aspire Arkansas, a major research initiative to gather county-by-county data on indicators of community health, from economic opportunity to education to healthcare and community engagement.

Here are the aspirations for Arkansans and their communities that Arkansas Community Foundation has chosen to measure:

1. Children and youth will excel academically.
2. People will have education and training needed to compete in today's economy.
3. Families will be stable and nurturing.
4. People will be healthy.
5. People will have the economic means to sustain a quality standard of living.
6. Communities will be safe.
7. People will be engaged in their community.

We're in the middle of data gathering and reporting right now, but the Aspire Arkansas report on these indicators will be published later this year. Using the report, people throughout Arkansas will be able to take a look at how each county is faring on these important quality of life issues. Arkansas Community Foundation's offices throughout our state will be able to make grants and build partnerships to address the areas of need we identify through data analysis.

This year marks the 35th anniversary of Arkansas Community Foundation. We believe the Aspire Arkansas initiative is a giant step in our ability to effectively engage people, connect resources and inspire solutions. This report is our gift to Arkansas, a way to celebrate where we've been, where we are now and what we where we need to go in the next 35 years!

Heather Larkin  
President and CEO

Arkansas Community Foundation meets National Standards for operational quality, donor service and accountability in the community foundation sector.

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*Symphony, continued from page 1*

And though the recordings will help to capture and preserve this original Arkansas art, you can't beat hearing it in person. "The arts communicate things about life and people that can't be said through words, and they work most successfully when they're communicated to an audience directly," said Jeter.

To support the Fort Smith Symphony's endowment, visit [www.arcf.org](http://www.arcf.org).

# 2010 Outstanding Philanthropic Corporations Engage Employees, Connect Resources

Each February, Arkansas Community Foundation celebrates local companies that go beyond business as usual to make community service a priority. On February 22, in partnership with *Arkansas Business*, we honored three Outstanding Philanthropic Corporations at the Arkansas Business of the Year awards.

In the Small Business category, the *Texarkana Community Journal's* staff of five has managed to expand the magazine's readership by more than 100 percent since 2007 while maintaining broad community involvement and launching new charitable initiatives. The *Journal* regularly donates advertising space to nonprofit organizations, particularly in the area of disease prevention and awareness, and partners with local restaurants and businesses to give away food and services at Thanksgiving and Mother's Day. *Journal* employees can opt-in to make donations to a charity of the month and are encouraged to research and write stories about the causes they care about. Most recently, the *Journal* initiated a program to honor five Women of the Year representing various fields and occupations. The Women of the Year will help select the recipients of annual college scholarships from the new Texarkana Community Journal Scholarship Fund.

Teleflora, the Mid-Size Business honoree, makes employee giving a priority. The Paragould-based floral services company, a branch of the national Teleflora corporation headquartered in Los Angeles, allows each employee to designate \$1,000 to the 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization of his or her choice and will also match employee contributions to approved charities. In addition, the company established a scholarship endowment to help employees' children achieve higher education. Teleflora volunteers team up to participate in the American Cancer Society Relay for Life, Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure and March of Dimes Walk for Life. They've also sponsored six Wish Granting ceremonies for the Make-A-Wish Foundation. Teleflora provides in-kind meeting space and floral arrangements for local civic clubs and encourages employees to volunteer their time at local schools through the Paragould Chamber of Commerce Partners in Education Program.

In 2000, Large Business honoree Tyson Foods began a 10-year commitment to help fight hunger, donating millions of pounds of protein products in partnership with local and national hunger relief agencies, including over one million pounds donated in Arkansas in 2010. In addition to this ongoing initiative, Tyson Foods provides ongoing support to a multitude of nonprofit organizations in the areas of education, health and human service and the environment. The company's legal department provides pro bono assistance to Legal Aid of Arkansas, and the transportation department provides trailers for use at nonprofit events. Last year, more than 100 Tyson employees worked together to assist EOA Children's House in relocating to its new facility in Springdale; the company even chipped in to completely refurbish the new Children's House kitchen and dining space. Tyson matches employee gifts to the United Way, raising more than \$500,000 for the United Way of Northwest Arkansas in 2010, and recently began an annual volunteer fair at the corporate office each year to encourage employees to get involved in the community.



By engaging employees and connecting resources, these Outstanding Philanthropic Corporations are working to build Arkansas's communities.



*Teleflora employees present flowers to residents of Focus, Inc., during Teleflora's Make Someone Smile Week.*

# Youth Advisory Councils Take Root in NW Arkansas

“We are all a part of a community, and it is our obligation to give back to that community,” said Steve Percival, a member of both the Fayetteville Area Community Foundation (FACF) Board and the Fayetteville School Board. “That’s what it is all about to me. That’s what I want these teens to learn.”

With that goal in mind, Fayetteville Area Community Foundation has partnered with the Service Learning classes at both Springdale High School and Fayetteville High School to foster the study – and implementation – of philanthropy by students in Northwest Arkansas.

As Arkansas Community Foundation’s newest local office, FACF was eager to implement the Foundation’s successful Youth Advisory Council (YAC) program in Washington County. Since 2002, members of ARCF’s 19 YAC groups across the state have given more than \$250,000 to charitable causes benefitting children and youth – money raised by the students themselves and invested in permanent endowments.

When Kim Dutton, executive director of FACF, discussed with Percival how best to introduce YAC to Northwest Arkansas, he used his contacts and knowledge of area schools to encourage the partnership.



*Service Learning students from Fayetteville High School and teachers they helped at McNair Middle School in Fayetteville show off some of the science equipment purchased with SIMS grant funds. They are (Front row L-R): Karen Allain, Sandy Torres, and Hannah Moore. (Back Row L-R): Brenda Kinkaid, LouAnn Hayes, Bobby Stinson, Melanie Chandler, Virginia Brandt, Ann Covington and Jocelyn Flores.*

“We made a presentation to Vicki Thomas, the Fayetteville School District Superintendent, then to a co-op meeting of all 18 school district superintendents,” Percival recalled. “It’s turned into a successful marriage at both Fayetteville and Springdale High, and we have plans to move to more districts in the future.”

Service Learning Instructor Connie Crisp of Fayetteville High School put together an intensive workshop early in the Fall 2010 semester to teach students about endowments and grants. Then students put their skills to work to implement

## ARCF Local Offices

Carroll County Community Foundation  
 Clark County Community Foundation  
 Cleburne County Community Foundation  
 Columbia County Community Foundation  
 Community Foundation of Faulkner County  
 Community Foundation of Lee County  
 Conway County Community Foundation  
 Craighead County Community Foundation  
 Delta Area Community Foundation

Endowment Foundation of Cross County  
 Endowment Foundation of Greene County  
 Fayetteville Area Community Foundation  
 Fort Smith Area Community Foundation  
 Hot Springs Area Community Foundation  
 Johnson County Community Foundation  
 Mississippi County Community Foundation  
 Monroe County Community Foundation  
 Ouachita Valley Community Foundation

Phillips County Community Foundation  
 Pine Bluff Area Community Foundation  
 Pope County Community Foundation  
 Sharp County Community Foundation  
 Southeast Arkansas Community Foundation  
 St. Francis County Community Foundation  
 Texarkana Area Community Foundation  
 Twin Lakes Community Foundation  
 White County Community Foundation

philanthropy in their school and their community.

“The kids were overwhelmed at first, but you have to start somewhere. Each of them wrote a grant during the first nine weeks,” Crisp said. “Now understanding needs and when we might want to solicit grants is becoming a habit. When we talk about other projects, students will say, ‘What about getting a grant for that?’”

Fayetteville Service Learning student Ella Caraway thinks learning about foundations and grantwriting helps expand teens’ perspectives. “It’s always good to know how to solve large problems,” she said. Classmate Annika Tabassum said, “Learning about the grantwriting process has helped me learn how to communicate the objectives of a certain group to an audience.”

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*“When we talk about other projects, students will say, ‘What about getting a grant for that?’”*

— *Connie Crisp*

*Fayetteville High Service Learning Instructor*

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For fellow classmate Rachel Grundl, “It has also shown me that through hard work and assessing the needs in a rational way, you can receive what you need. Seeing what teachers and officials do to get supplies brings a new understanding and maturity. It also brings great joy and satisfaction in knowing that you have helped a teacher whom you admire in getting the supplies and help they need.”

Another student, Max Coffin, thinks writing grants is a great way to improve literacy. “Learning about grantwriting and grantmaking helped me by letting me understand the value of helping others.”

YAC members statewide are charged with building an endowment to fund the projects they believe are important and then deciding which programs from local nonprofits to support using their endowment funds. While this school year’s partnership with Service Learning concentrated on an introduction to foundations and writing grants, Crisp plans to begin raising funds for the Fayetteville Area YAC endowment during the Spring semester. She’ll expand the membership in YAC to include students outside her Service Learning Class to do more good for more causes.

## Students Helping Students

Last month Fayetteville Area Community Foundation Executive Director Kim Dutton couldn’t contain her enthusiasm for the contributions of Service Learning students to Arkansas Community Foundation’s Science Initiative for Middle Schools (SIMS) program in Washington County. Teachers in grades 5-8 apply for \$500 SIMS grants to fund consumable science materials that are made possible by an endowed gift to ARCF from the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation.

“Last year only six SIMS grants were received by teachers in Washington County,” Dutton explained. “For 2010, 32 SIMS grants were received, largely because of the efforts of Service Learning students who helped educate teachers about the program’s benefits and even wrote the grant requests for programs.”

Early in the 2010 fall semester, students learned about the work of foundations and skills needed to write grants. Service Learning students at both Springdale and Fayetteville High hosted in-service sessions for their teachers and helped teachers determine what projects should be submitted and how best to write grants for the projects.

“This is where other communities can replicate our success,” Dutton said. “In addition to SIMS, students have applied for grants from many other funding sources, and another one was funded yesterday! It has been crazy to watch how much money those students can bring into the school district with a little guidance.”

## Teens and Elderly Benefit from Nursing Home Concerts

Shannon Brewer's earliest performances were for her elderly grandmother. Playing tunes on her keyboard or child-size violin, she delighted in bringing a smile to her grandmother's face. "She was in constant pain from various health issues," Shannon explained, "but when I played, all of her pain and sadness melted away." It was less a performance than a ministry.

A few years ago, as Shannon worked to complete the requirements for her Girl Scout Gold Award, she remembered those early performances for her grandmother and was struck with an idea: why not organize a series of concerts at nursing homes? Her fellow Girl Scouts got in on the act, performing various talents to entertain the nursing home residents.

As she packed her violin to head home after one of those performances, Shannon heard the words that turned her enjoyment of playing music for the elderly into an all-out mission. "A gentleman suffering from dementia called out to me, 'Young lady! I know I may not remember you, but please don't forget about us!'"

Shannon never has. Now a senior at Texas High School in Texarkana, she is the director of her own nonprofit organization, Players and Listeners (PAL), a group that coordinates ongoing concert series performed by high school students for nursing home residents. "PAL really fosters goodwill in the students and builds character. It also gives them community service hours they need to apply for college, helps them work on the art they like to do and gives them a place to perform," Shannon said.

Shannon first worked with her high school counselor to establish PAL as an official school club. When one of the founding members transferred to another school, PAL's second chapter was formed. As Shannon and her parents worked together to secure 501(c)(3) nonprofit status for PAL in order to begin fundraising, three more chapters popped up at other Texarkana area high schools. They've even received inquiries from schools in New Jersey and Kansas.

Part of PAL's instant success can be attributed to its simple formula: students provide the entertainment, and the nursing homes provide an eager audience. The experience is mutually rewarding for everyone involved. "The residents are generally



*Shannon Brewer organized PAL as a way to bring the arts to nursing home residents.*



*PAL volunteers prepare for a performance.*

so excited to see us. They bask in the attention the performers give them and tap their feet to the songs. We get so many smiles and hugs; it's really encouraging," Shannon noted.

As Shannon graduates and leaves home this fall, she hopes to organize a new PAL chapter at college. And back home, her parents will continue to support PAL and stay involved with the local high school chapters. "We're trying to branch out as much as we can," Shannon said.

Visit [www.playersandlisteners.org](http://www.playersandlisteners.org) to see video of performances and learn how to start a PAL chapter in your area.

# Field of Interest Funds Keep You Connected to a Cause

Are you passionate about the arts? Do you enjoy giving to small, grassroots arts programs like Players and Listeners (page 6) and established institutions like the Fort Smith Symphony (page 1). With a field of interest (FOI) fund, you can leave a charitable legacy that will support the arts (or animal welfare, or healthcare, or the environment) now and in the future.

When you create a new FOI fund, you designate your charitable gift to support a broad area of interest or a specific geographic area, and Arkansas Community Foundation uses our grantmaking expertise to identify projects within your field of interest that are making the greatest impact. You can also pool your contribution with others who share your charitable interests by making a gift to one of our existing field of interest funds supporting the arts, the environment, healthcare and animal welfare.

You can create your own fund named for your family or a loved one, or establish a general fund that would encourage others who share your interests to contribute. Nonprofit organizations serving the cause or area you care about can apply for grants through a competitive process that allows for a wide-reaching impact.

Preserve your passion with a gift to a field of interest fund at Arkansas Community Foundation. Contact us at 501-372-1116 to learn more about the tax benefits and potential charitable impact of these funds.



Photo by Steven Jones and What if Creative

## October 15, 2010 - January 15, 2011

Tracy, Bryn, Maddie and Andie Bagwell Fund

Martha Couchman Endowment for the Forrest City C.A.R.E. Center & the St. Francis County Food Pantry

Janie Barnett Eldridge Memorial Scholarship Endowment

Roy and Val Fisher Endowment

Heber Springs Swim Club Fund

Maumelle Hornet Fund

Trish Hubbell Memorial Fund

Lucas Clayton Hunsicker Scholarship Fund

Komen Men's Special Task Force Fund

Arkansas Medal of Honor Scholarship Fund

North Little Rock School District New Stadium/Turf Project Fund

Seven Hills Residential Community Endowment

Betty T. Sloan Charitable Endowment

St. John Legacy Scholarship Endowment

Barbara and Gerald Verzal Endowment

New Funds

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

## ARCF.org is All New

We're proud to announce our newly re-designed website at [www.arcf.org](http://www.arcf.org). On our new site, you'll find:

- Detailed information about each of our major grant opportunities
- News about nonprofits and individuals who are making a difference in Arkansas
- Flexible ways to give

We hope you'll take a peek and give us feedback about how we can continue to give you the information you need to increase the impact of your charitable giving and connect with the causes you care about.

