

Moving the Needle



Flint Kids Learn supports year-round, early childhood education

**An Interview with Isaiah M. Oliver,
President and Chief Executive Officer, Community Foundation of Greater Flint**

EDITORS' NOTE *Isaiab Oliver assumed his current post in June of 2017. Prior to this, he served as Vice President of Community Impact. He served five years on the Flint Community Schools Board of Education, including two years as board president. His executive experience also includes serving four years on the Hurley Medical Center Board of Managers. He previously served as Associate Administrator for Workforce, Community and Grant Development at Mott Community College. A graduate of Flint Northwestern High School, he earned a bachelor of applied arts degree from Central Michigan University.*



Isaiab M. Oliver

ORGANIZATION BRIEF *The Community Foundation of Greater Flint (cfgf.org) is a tax-exempt public charity created by and for the people of Genesee County. CFGF enables people with philanthropic interests to easily and effectively support the issues they care about – immediately or through their will. Donors can establish a charitable fund at the foundation by contributing a variety of assets. Those assets are then carefully invested by the foundation. Established in 1988 through the merger of The Flint Public Trust, founded in 1950, and the Flint Area Health Foundation, created in 1978, the resulting Community Foundation combined the strengths of these two Flint institutions to position itself for future growth and giving. Since the merger, assets have grown from \$10 million to more than \$246 million. More than 27,000 contributors ranging from modest to magnificent means have enabled the Community Foundation to award more than \$125 million in grants to the greater Flint area from over 475 charitable funds.*

What were the origins of the Community Foundation of Greater Flint and how has the organization evolved?

The Community Foundation was established in 1988 in Flint through a \$10-million merger of The Flint Public Trust and the Flint Area Health Foundation.

Over the past 30 years we have grown significantly. We're at \$246 million in assets right now and we have given away over \$125 million to nonprofit organizations in Flint and Genesee County. We steward over 475 charitable funds to meet the needs of people in Flint and Genesee County.

Over time, a few things happened. We gained credibility through our grantmaking and community investments. We also built many relationships and we had to learn how to use every tool in our toolbox. We are influential by way of grantmaking and we're engaged with people who have the resources to be generous in making the community better. However, we also have to navigate the space in between, which is often the place where community foundations play best. This is community leadership and moving the needle without dollars but with influence and collaboration.

million through the Flint Child Health and Development Fund, also known as the Flint Kids Fund, from over 17,000 people from all 50 states and 15 different countries and all branches of the military. This Fund is focused on the long-term health and development needs of 0- to 6-year-olds impacted by the water crisis.

Grants from the Flint Kids Fund are advised by a local committee, many who are medical experts and Flint residents.

Flint Kids Learn is different. We learned a great deal while this crisis was going on. As we were getting deeper into the crisis and the response, we learned about the mitigators of lead exposure in 0- to 6-year-olds or even in vulnerable populations.

We found that the leading mitigator of lead exposure to 0- to 6-year-olds was high-quality, year-round, day-long, early childhood education.

There was a fund established to own a building that was focused on the highest quality early childhood education that we knew to be available in the country. There was a purpose-built building developed at 36,000 square feet and at a cost of \$15 million that hosts 218

young people ages 0 to 5. Because we never had a depreciating asset on our books, that was segregated in the supporting organization Flint Kids Learn to ensure that this building will be forever used for the purpose it was developed.

While we have many funds that are focused on Flint, over \$30 million was contributed in response to the Flint water crisis. Our role has been to steward those resources effectively, and be transparent in our grantmaking along the way. We've engaged the community in new ways,

conducting information sessions that demonstrate ways the money is being invested.

We're moving the needle in providing a continuum of funding opportunities for Flint kids, including the new Flint Promise Fund for graduating seniors. ●



The new Educare Flint facility opened in December 2017

Will you highlight Foundation for Flint and Flint Kids Learn?

Foundation for Flint was created to host resources that are directly related to the Flint water crisis. There were contributions for economic stimulus. We have raised \$18