

Looking Forward,
Giving Back

Volume 23, Issue 3
Summer 2026

Scott County Community Foundation Community Connection

Inside This Issue

Early Childhood Director

Judge Kleopfer Scholarship

Berley Goodin Passes Away

Board of Directors

Ryan Payne, *Chair*

Jamie Longacre, *Vice Chair*

Shari Baumann, *Treasurer*

Janie Alexander, *Secretary*

Carmen Boley

Tinisha Bowles-Densford

Jennifer Coward

Susan Jerrell

Al Riggle

Jordan Shuler

Nicole White

Staff

Jaime Toppe,
Executive Director

Charlotte Boswell,
Financial Officer

2026 Community Grants Announced



Over \$157,000 has been awarded to several local agencies during our 2026 Community Grants Program. The grant recipients were formally honored at a grants brunch.

The organizations awarded funding include:

CASA of Scott County, \$20,000 for operating expenses to support their mission of advocating for abused and neglected children;

CEASE of Scott County, \$3,811 for "Healthcare Equity and Access" project;

CRADLE Family Resource Center, \$21,650.50 for operating expenses to support pregnant women and families of young children;

Gleaners Food Bank, \$8,000 for school-based pantry programs at Austin and Scottsburg high schools;

Holding Space Recovery, \$10,000 for part-time peer recovery coach to provide transportation and services;

Junior Achievement of Kentuckiana, \$3,750 for expansion of financial programs in schools;

LifeSmart Youth, \$5,000 for Healthy Youth for Scott County initiative, which provides health education to students in both school districts;

Lincoln Heritage Council/Scouting America, \$3,000 for scouting registrations;

Preservation Alliance Inc., \$10,000 for operating expenses for the Scott County Heritage Center and Museum;

Scott County Family YMCA, \$3,000 for camp scholarships;

Scott County Master Gardeners Association, \$1,000 to beautify the fairgrounds;

Scott County Partnership, \$21,500 for Clearinghouse food pantry support staff;

Scott County Partnership, \$48,897 for CAPE educational initiatives;

Scott County Partnership, \$15,000 for Covering Kids and Families insurance navigators;

Still Water Individual and Family Therapy Services, \$3,000 for mental health scholarship fund.

The grants were also made possible from the Borden Family Community Granting Fund, the Boswell Family Fund, Patricia E. Bridge Community Fund, Creating Community Fund, Phillip Dold Sr. Memorial Fund, Terry Fewell Memorial Unrestricted Fund, the Garten Foundation, Addie Mae Graham Memorial Fund, Lauren Graham Memorial Fund, Dustin and Derek Jones Memorial Fund, Kilburn-White Unrestricted Fund, Hazel and Lowell Lowry Sr. Memorial Fund, John and Janice Martin Unrestricted Fund, Neighbors Helping Neighbors Fund, NWSB Community Fund, Dr. William and Diann Scott Unrestricted Fund, Dan and Mary Lou Slattery Fund, Devonnia Tscheulin Memorial Fund, Wesbanco Fund, William Frasier Wetzel Memorial Fund, Yellow Rose of Nancy R. Laird Memorial Fund, Scott County Immediate Response Fund, Scott County Memorial Fund and Community Enrichment Fund.

Grant to SCP Launches First-Ever Early Childhood Director



Scott County Partnership Executive Director Heather Law, middle, accepts a grant to fund the new Early Childhood Director position. Shown with her are Early Childhood Committee members Christy Davis, Emily Jordan, Karolee Tattersall; Director Emily Spellman; and Early Childhood Committee members Kim White and Pam Akemon.

In a major step forward for the future of Scott County's youngest learners, the Scott County Community Foundation has awarded a grant to Scott County Partnership to establish the county's first-ever early childhood director position.

Funded through a grant from Lilly Endowment Inc., this new position is secured through Dec. 31, 2028, and represents the culmination of years of planning, collaboration, and community investment focused on improving access to high-quality early childhood education and care in Scott County.

The position was created in response to findings from the Scott County Early Care and Education Strategic Action Plan, commissioned by SCCF through its GIFT VIII Community Leadership Planning Grant. The plan identified a critical need for coordinated leadership and systems-building to ensure that every child in Scott County has access to high-quality, developmentally appropriate care and education from birth to age five.

"Early childhood is where lifelong learning begins," said SCCF Executive Director Jaime Toppe. "This investment reflects our belief that strong communities are built by supporting children and families from the very beginning. We are proud to help launch this role and to partner with the Scott County Partnership to make this vision a reality."

Research conducted during the planning process revealed significant challenges facing local families, including a shortage of childcare options, affordability barriers, and limited access to quality early learning opportunities. Scott County is home to an estimated 1,743 children under age six, yet current childcare capacity meets only a fraction of community need.

SCCF and SCP are pleased to announce the hiring of Emily Spellman as the new Early Childhood Director. She will provide strategic leadership

focused on strengthening childcare quality, increasing family engagement, improving school readiness, and coordinating community-wide early childhood efforts.

Spellman brings a unique blend of experience and passion to the role, having served as an elementary educator and as a family case manager for the State of Indiana. Her professional background has provided firsthand insight into both the educational and social barriers many families face – and the opportunities that emerge when communities invest in children early. Emily received a bachelor of arts in communication from Indiana University Southeast, a Transition to Teach Certification from the American College of Education, and a master of arts degree in teaching from the American College of Education. She is additionally endorsed in Keys to Literacy and has completed comprehensive Science of Reading training.

"I believe that meaningful change happens when education, compassion, and strategic investment intersect," said Spellman. "I have not only witnessed the barriers families and children face – I have walked alongside them and helped navigate through challenges. I am honored to help lead this work in Scott County and excited about what we can accomplish together."

"We are incredibly excited to welcome Emily Spellman into this role. She will help shape the future of early childhood education and family support in our community," said Early Childhood Committee Chair Emily Jordan. "This position represents an investment in our children, our families, and the long-term success of our entire community. We believe every child deserves a strong start, and we are thrilled to have Emily in this important position that will boost our community toward building a brighter future for our community, families and children."

The grant to Scott County Partnership represents a natural evolution of both organizations' longstanding commitment to education. Through its leadership of the Community Alliances Promoting Education (CAPE) grant, SCP has already demonstrated a strong commitment to educational advancement for middle and high school students. This new collaboration extends that commitment to the earliest years of life.

"This is a powerful example of what can happen when organizations align around a shared vision," said SCP Executive Director Heather Law. "By working together, we can create a stronger continuum of support for children and families, from birth through adulthood."

National research consistently shows that investments in early childhood education generate long-term returns through improved academic outcomes, stronger workforce participation, healthier families, and reduced public costs. With this new role, Scott County is making a bold investment in its future – one child, one family, and one community at a time.

Emily Spellman may be contacted at emilyrspellman@outlook.com. The community is also encouraged to follow the initiative on Facebook at SEED – Scott Early Education & Development for resources and support.

Judge James Kleopfer Memorial Scholarship Created



We are honored to announce the creation of the Judge James Kleopfer Memorial Scholarship Fund. The new fund honors the life, legacy, and service of longtime Scott County judge and community leader James Dale “Jim” Kleopfer Jr. The scholarship will provide future education-

al support to graduating seniors from Austin High School, Scottsburg High School, and Henryville High School.

Judge Kleopfer passed away on Nov. 30, 2025, leaving behind a legacy of public service, integrity, and dedication to his hometown and community. He served as Judge of the Scott County Circuit Court for 24 years, from 1981 to 2004, after being elected in 1980. Known as a “no-nonsense” but fair judge, Jim earned the respect of countless residents throughout his decades of service.

One story shared by his family captures both his wit and his unwavering sense of accountability. During a child support hearing, a defendant offered many reasons why he had failed to meet his obligations, finally telling Judge Kleopfer, “Judge, you can’t get blood out of a turnip.” Judge Kleopfer replied, “Well, that may be, but this court can certainly put that turnip in jail for contempt.”

Born on October 16, 1942, at the McClain Clinic in Scottsburg, Jim was the son of James Dale Kleopfer Sr. and Earlene Milles Kleopfer. He was raised on the family farm south of Lexington as the oldest of three brothers – Jim, Robert, and Gary – during the World War II era, while his father served in the Army Air Force. From an early age, he learned the value of hard work, helping raise turkeys on the family farm and setting an example for his younger brothers.



Gary, Robert, and Jim Kleopfer

His brother Robert shared that rounding up turkeys was no small feat. It required getting up very early in the morning, grabbing the large birds by their feet to haul them to a coop for transportation to the processing plant. “This was quite the struggle for little boys against a 20-to-25-pound tom turkey. He set an example for us and did not complain about scratched arms and legs,” said Robert.

His grandparents also played an important role in shaping the man he would become. His paternal grandparents, Elmer and Ethel Craigmyle Kleopfer, farmed near Lexington, where long summer days of putting up hay taught the boys endurance and discipline. His maternal grandparents, Earl and Muriel Hall Milles, also left a lasting influence—particularly his grandfather Earl, a barber who also served as Trustee of Lexington Township and helped spark Jim’s lifelong interest in public service and local government. His grandmothers helped nurture another lifelong passion: gardening, which remained one of Jim’s greatest joys throughout his life.

After graduating from Lexington High School in 1960, Jim pursued higher education at Indiana University and the University of Louisville, where he earned his Juris Doctor degree in 1968. He later taught at Henryville Junior High in the mid-1970’s and practiced law in Henryville before beginning his distinguished judicial career.

Outside the courtroom, Jim was known for his love of gardening and his commitment to preserving the beauty and history of Lexington. He planted many trees and the Zoysia grass in Lexington Cemetery, carrying water to the cemetery until all the plants were sturdy enough to live. He beautified his house the same way. “You can drive by his home and the cemetery and still see all the work he did to make the two areas pretty,” shared family friend Jeannie Carlisle.

He was instrumental in caring for Lexington Cemetery, where he is laid to rest. He was a longtime member of Lexington Presbyterian Church, a charter member of the Lexington Historical Society, and a member of the Scott County Heritage Center and Museum.

His connection to the Scott County Community Foundation was also personal. In SCCF’s earliest years, he served briefly as a member of the Board of Directors, helping support the Foundation’s mission during its formative stages.

To honor his legacy, his family created the Judge James Kleopfer Memorial Scholarship Fund. Scholarships will be awarded to students who plan to attend any type of post-secondary education, from technical certifications and skilled trades training to associate’s and bachelor’s degrees. Applicants must also demonstrate a strong work ethic through work experience or community volunteerism.

“We’re thankful to Judge Kleopfer’s family for honoring his legacy through this permanent fund,” shared Community Foundation Executive Director Jaime Toppe. “This is a meaningful way to honor his life while investing in the next generation of students from the communities he served so faithfully.”



PO Box 25 Phone: 812.752.2057
60 North Main Street Email: info@scottcountyfoundation.org
Scottsburg, IN 47170
www.scottcountyfoundation.org
www.facebook.com/ScottCountyCommunityFoundation

Non Profit
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
SCOTTSBURG, IN
PERMIT NO. 12

Looking Forward, Giving Back.

Former board member Berley Goodin passes

We are saddened to share the passing of former board member, Berley Goodin. Berley served on the Board of Directors from 2002-2008.

Berley was passionate about education, serving 52 years as a teacher, coach, assistant principal, principal and superintendent during his tenure at Scott County School District 1. He started the first all day kindergarten, the preschool program, the Austin Learning Center after-school program, and the Academy, which allows high school students to earn an associate's degree.

When the Community Foundation was determining where to place a strategic focus, Berley pushed for early childhood education as having the greatest impact. Thus started our efforts in focusing on our community's youngest learners.

When the Austin Alumni Association created an endowment fund at the Community Foundation for graduating seniors, Berley announced that the school district would match donations up to \$25,000, a goal that was easily met and has had a great impact on students ever since.

As a board member, Berley faithfully served on the committee to evaluate the Excellence in Education awards, which were grants awarded to teachers for classroom projects in Scott County School District 2, made possible by the Timothy Michael Wolf Memorial Scholarship Fund.

Berley's contributions to the schools, Community Foundation, and Scott County community as a whole will impact our lives for years to come. He will be greatly missed.



Top photo: Berley signs the agreement to create the AHS Alumni Education Fund.

Bottom photo: Berley presents matching funds from SCSD1 to benefit the endowment fund.