



PO Box 33
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SJACF.org

YOUR COMMUNITY FUND AT WORK

Planting the seed for a better tomorrow.

WHAT'S HAPPENING
FALL 2025

Celebrating Inclusive Play at Fantasy Forest 2.0

On October 1, 2025, the SJACF Board, the City of St. Johns, and key project partners, donors, and supporters celebrated the completion of Phase 1 of Fantasy Forest 2.0, an Unlimited Play Inclusive Playground. What was once the beloved wooden Fantasy Forest has been transformed into a fully accessible space where children of all abilities can explore, connect, and experience the joy of barrier-free play. Thoughtfully redesigned by the City of St. Johns Friends of Fantasy Forest Project Team and expert playground designers, this vibrant destination now offers kids opportunities to grow physically, socially, emotionally, and developmentally, side by side. Special thanks to our (over 200) donors who helped make this project a reality.



"Play is more than fun—it's where our whole family connects, learns, and feels whole. For us, an accessible playground isn't just nice-to-have, it's where barriers fall away, and we can simply be together. It's where we laugh freely, explore side by side, and create the kind of moments that remind us what matters most. In those moments we see the world through our children's eyes. We celebrate differences, try new things, and grow—not just as individuals, but as a family. Fantasy Forest 2.0 isn't just a playground, it's a place where families like ours feel seen, included, and part of something bigger. It's how a community stops being just where we live and becomes where we belong."

- David Walter



A Legacy That Lives Beyond Today

How much do you spend each month on streaming services, apps, or other subscriptions? Now imagine swapping just one of those in 2026 for something far more meaningful. A contribution today will create a lasting impact and will continue to give back to the St. Johns community for generations. This year, we are proud to launch our Lasting Legacy Campaign, an opportunity to turn small, manageable gifts into a powerful force for good. By making a yearly pledge or even a modest monthly contribution that comfortably fits your budget, you become part of a long-term vision that strengthens our community. Every dollar invested helps our endowment fund grow, ensuring that vital programs, resources, and opportunities continue to thrive well into the future. Your support isn't just a donation, it's a legacy of hope, growth, and community pride. We hope you'll join us in building something that lasts. Your contribution today plants the seeds for tomorrow's success. Scan the QR code or visit sjacf.org to learn more!

ARE YOU
LEAVING A
LEGACY?



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Meet Our YAC Student Representative



My name is Nicholas Schafer, and I am currently a Junior at St. Johns High School. I am serving as the student representative for the St. Johns Area Community Fund, and also as an Officer for the Youth Action Committee at the high school. The Youth Action Committee, or YAC, is a volunteer organization that is led by students. We focus on creating opportunities for our students. One of our big events include the Rake-n-Run event, where volunteers rake the lawns of people in our community. Another big thing we have that students participate in is the Student Pantry. The pantry not only provides food and hygiene products to students in need, but also teaches empathy to the students who volunteer.

My job as the Student Representative is to be a liaison between the Community Fund and YAC, keeping them informed on my actions. This includes everything from attendance at meetings to updates on new projects and addressing the ongoing needs of students. My goal is to provide the board members with information on how to best serve the students. As a high school student, I have a unique perspective on the challenges my peers face, and I use that insight to advocate for resources and programs that truly benefit our community.

From Students to Certified Officials: A Pathway to Success

"Our goal is to create a pipeline of qualified referees for our community, while giving some of our youth the opportunity to build a skillset that can financially benefit them."
- Bean Barrett



The RefReps grant provides training materials for Mr. Bean Barrett's Sports class which is an exciting addition that opens doors for students in an entirely new way. With these instructional tools, students can now complete a full referee preparation course right in the classroom. Upon finishing the program, they will have the opportunity to become MHSAA-certified officials in the sport of their choice, all at no cost to them.

This initiative could not come at a better time. Communities across Michigan are facing a significant shortage of officials for youth and high school athletics, creating challenges for local sports programs. By supporting this project, we are not only addressing a real need but also empowering students with practical, marketable skills they can use immediately. Beyond the certification itself, this grant encourages students to step into leadership roles, build confidence, and contribute to the athletic programs that have shaped them. It's a meaningful investment in both their future and the broader St. Johns community, a true win-win for everyone involved.

Turn Your Ideas Into Impact

What does St. Johns need to become an even more vibrant community and what do you hope to see? We're excited to keep the conversation going and gather even more possibilities for positive change. If you have an idea, or know an organization that could benefit from an SJACF grant, we encourage you to apply. It's simple: visit SJACF.org, click the Grant Program tab, and submit your request by email or mail. Our Board reviews each proposal with consideration for how it will benefit St. Johns residents, enhance the community, keep us current, attract visitors, and add creativity and value to the area. Your ideas can help shape the future of St. Johns. We can't wait to hear them!

