

FELIX E. MARTIN JR. FOUNDATION



MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN MUHLENBERG COUNTY

REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY 2024-2025



*Students exploring art and nature with
the Big Twigs at Lake Malone State Park,
funded in part through a
Felix E. Martin Jr. Foundation grant*

LOOKING BACK ON A YEAR OF INVESTMENT IN COMMUNITY

As the Felix E. Martin Jr. Foundation closes the books on the 2024–2025 fiscal year, we are proud to share another year of meaningful investment in Muhlenberg County. Over the past year, the Foundation distributed nearly \$3 million to support organizations, programs, and initiatives that strengthen our community.

Since Mr. Martin’s transformative \$50 million bequest was announced in 2008, nearly \$42 million has been invested in the community to fuel local programs and partnerships. Even with those investments in the community, thanks to careful stewardship and strategic investment, the Foundation still manages over \$50 million in its endowment. This will allow the Foundation to continue to commit more than \$2 million annually to support a thriving and resilient Muhlenberg County—now and into the future.

But you might ask, “Who benefits from Foundation support?”

Quite simply: the entire community! Whether visiting a local park, attending a theatre performance, gaining a workforce credential, or taking a child to a preschool literacy event, families are enjoying Foundation investments designed to reach and uplift every corner of Muhlenberg County.

On the following pages, you’ll find examples of projects strategically directed across the Foundation’s five focus areas - Community Development & Quality of Place, Quality Education and Training, Economic Development, Community Engagement & Collaboration, and Health & Human Services.

Here at the Foundation, we are endlessly thankful for all of the people and organizations who partner with us, bringing their ideas and their passion for community. We are honored to support their work to make Muhlenberg the best possible place to live work and raise and family and we know that without them none of this progress would be possible!



**ALYSSA
MANNING**

President



**MARK A.
CAMPISANO**

Chairman of the Board



Foundation Staff, 2025

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & QUALITY OF PLACE



From parks, to public art, to community clean-ups, the Foundation is investing to help build a vibrant, welcoming community for residents and visitors alike.

- Greater Muhlenberg Parks & Recreation System receives over \$250,000 annually to support its programs and facilities where over 1,000 local kids sign up for community sports each year and thousands of people from across the state visit to play in travel team tournaments.
- An additional \$280,000 was invested for updates and improvements at parks across the County.
- To support an active arts community, Felix E. Martin Jr. Hall, a civic and cultural hub for the County, receives over \$125,000 annually to ensure community access and staffing support for over 500 events held in this year. Grants also funded technology upgrades at the Merle Travis Center.
- The Spruce Up the 'Berg initiative provided \$150,000 for community driven beautification projects, empowering communities like Cleaton, Beechmont, Graham and Central City to organize volunteer clean-up events. Public art installations were created in Greenville, Central City, Midland, Millport, and South Carrollton, and additional grants were awarded to neighborhoods and businesses to create more welcoming, attractive environments for residents and visitors alike.



Spruce Up the 'Berg applications received \$150,000 this year to complete community beautification projects

QUALITY EDUCATION AND TRAINING

At the heart of long-term community growth is educational opportunity. This year the Foundation approved over \$1 million in new funding to support learning, from early childhood literacy to adult workforce training.



Per-K students at SOAR's Getting Ready 4 Kindergarten Workshops

Early Childhood

- The SOAR program, in partnership with Muhlenberg County Schools, continues to receive over \$300,000 annually to support early literacy and kindergarten readiness through family events and training, summer programs, and kindergarten camps, and distributed nearly 20,000 children's books through community events this year.
- Additional grant funding also provides a free book in the mail each month for all Muhlenberg County children under 5 years old through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in partnership with the local library.



Ignite 8th Graders attending Space Camp

K-12 Programs

- A \$100,000 grant to Muhlenberg County Schools supported the purchase of Career-Exploration Labs, which will give elementary and middle school students hands-on exposure to potential careers starting in fall 2025.
 - The Ignite program, now completing its third year and graduating its 1st class of 8th graders, served 60 middle school students with career exploration, mentorship, and work and life-skills development.
- Muhlenberg Achieves, a Foundation initiative in partnership with Muhlenberg County schools, focuses on postsecondary education access and success. Nearly \$400,000 was invested to provide programs and resources including family and student education sessions, career exploration and mentorship, college tours, application funding, dual credit assistance, and college coaching staff.

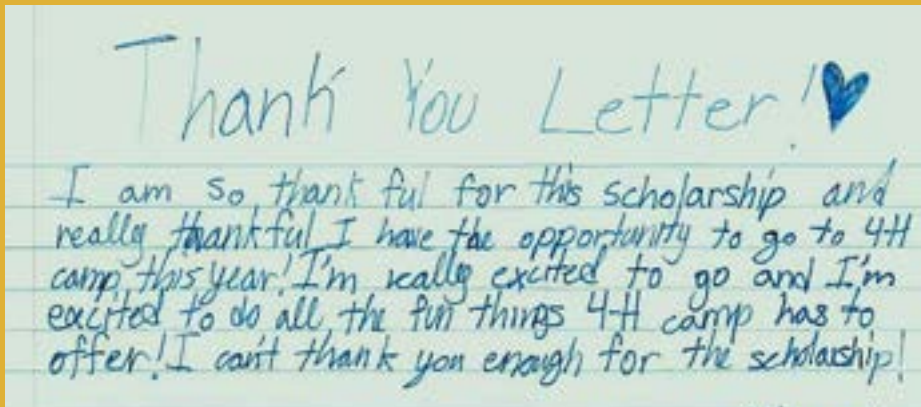


MCHS Seniors celebrate at Senior Decision Day 2025

QUALITY EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Youth Activities

Outside of the classroom activities are vital for youth development and quality of life, and with that in mind, the Foundation supported youth programming led by organizations such as Junior Achievement, 4H, Middle School Aviation Club, Youth Leadership, BETA, and many more.



Over 70 local students attended 4H summer camp in 2025 with the help of Foundation provided scholarships.



Adult & Workforce Learning

- In partnership with Madisonville Community College, the GED Learn and Earn program provided cash incentives for more than 90 students completing sections of the GED, encouraging local adults as they pursue new opportunities and greater earnings in the workforce.
- An additional \$200,000 grant supported the County's purchase of the former South Middle School for future use as a workforce training center.



Career Fair at MCHS



MCC's Aviation Training Hangar Opens



Murray State College Tour

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A strong local economy is essential to long-term community success and requires intentional investment and long-term vision. Alongside community development and workforce education efforts, the Foundation strengthened its commitment to economic development through both direct action and strategic partnerships.

- To support ongoing business development efforts, the Foundation provided \$300,000 in annual operating support for Muhlenberg Economic Growth Alliance (MEGA). With a dedicated staff and Board, MEGA has become a cornerstone of the county's economic strategy. In the past year, MEGA helped secure announcements of over 300 new jobs and \$450 million in capital investment, signaling meaningful progress in attracting and retaining businesses in Muhlenberg County.
- Impact investments of over \$1 million provided short-term capital to move forward infrastructure and development projects at Paradise Regional Industrial Park.
- The Foundation supported efforts to grow the local tourism economy with investments in projects which celebrate Muhlenberg's history and culture including Festival Square, John Prine Park, the Big Twigs, and the growing bourbon industry.
- Looking to the future, a new partnership with CityVisions, a nationally recognized community development firm, was launched to identify catalytic growth projects and long-term strategies for Muhlenberg County.



Governor Andy Beshear helps members of MEGA's Board of Directors and the Foundation's Advisory Council celebrate the groundbreaking for BE&E, the first manufacturing facility to be built at Paradise Regional Industrial Park.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & COLLABORATION

True community progress is powered by the people who live and lead within it. The Foundation believes that local leadership, collaboration, and shared vision are essential to bringing new ideas and initiatives to life and invests in supporting residents seeking to deepen their knowledge and networks.

- Partnering with the Greater Muhlenberg Chamber of Commerce, the Foundation co-hosted the the Muhlenberg Civic Leadership Institute (MCLI), graduating 23 emerging leaders who developed new projects designed to benefit the community.
- The Foundation awarded nearly \$20,000 in Community Leadership Funds to help local volunteers and changemakers participate in statewide conferences, workshops, and professional development opportunities. These investments empower local leaders to bring back fresh insights and expanded networks to enhance their work across Muhlenberg County's key focus areas.

"Muhlenberg Community Leadership Institute is a fantastic opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals who are passionate about making positive changes in our community. The program not only fosters valuable relationships but also provides a deeper understanding and appreciation for Muhlenberg County and all it has to offer. Be prepared to learn, grow, and gain insights that will inspire you to contribute meaningfully to the future of our community."

MCLI Grad 2024



Muhlenberg Civic Leadership Institute Graduates - Class of 2024

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES



Champions Drug Take-Back Day



Special Needs Day at Muhlenberg County Fair



Mobile Disaster Resource Trailer



Champions & Celebrate Recovery Volunteers at national training

Thriving communities begin with meeting basic needs. Even when economic and educational opportunities exist, many residents face barriers to accessing those opportunities, keeping them and the greater community from achieving their goals. The Foundation continues to prioritize supporting nonprofits that reduce those barriers, helping residents access critical resources such as food, health care, and recovery options, particularly in times of hardship.

This year, the Foundation awarded over \$200,000 in new funding to nonprofits providing critical health and human services.

- Grants supported the capacity building, training and direct services at organizations such as Hope2All Food Pantry, Celebrate Recovery, Champions for a Drug-Free Muhlenberg County, and Family Resource Youth Service Centers.
- A County-wide housing study was completed to assist local government, nonprofits and private developers identify strategies for development.
- Funding was allocated to one-time projects supporting homelessness services, disaster relief, and community resource outreach events.

THANK YOU

to all of our partners and friends in Muhlenberg County who share their ideas, their passion and their dedication to Muhlenberg County year after year. You are truly the heart of the work of the Foundation and we are inspired by YOU!



To find a full list of grants awarded in 2024-2025, scan the QR code above or see the foundation's website at www.felixmartinfoundation.org