

2019 Grant Awards Reception Presentation
Nancy Mills

Good evening and thank you to our wonderful musicians from Midwest Young Artists: Eva Sharfman (piano), Mimi Friedman (violin), and Grace Mockus (cello).

Welcome everyone to our 2019 Grant Awards Reception! I'm Nancy Mills, Chairman of the Foundation.

This is a very special night, because for the first time, we'll be distributing funds from our own endowment as well as city funds, for which we've been selected as the fiduciary. We're proud that the City has entrusted us with this responsibility, and even more proud that tonight we will be distributing over half a million dollars in grants, \$525,000 to be exact! This is by far the largest amount we have ever awarded in a year, and we know it will go a long way toward helping to address unmet needs in our community and expanding opportunities for our residents!

These grants are distributed from our endowment fund, which, thanks to the generous support of many individuals, foundations and businesses, has grown substantially over the years. As a result, our impact on the community is stronger than ever. But we know that the needs continue to grow, and therefore, we're committed to increasing our endowment and issuing more grant dollars each year.

I'd now like to introduce several notable guests.

We're honored to have Highland Park City Council members Kim Stone, Dan Kaufman and Alyssa Knobel here tonight,

Kevin Ryan, Assistant Superintendent for teaching and learning at North Shore School District 112 (Kevin is also the newest liaison to our board),

Debby Finn, the principal at Highland Park High School, and Matt Wallace and Alesia Margetis, assistant principals,

Gail Brown and Cindy Wolfson from Moraine Township,

And Park District Commissioner Terry Grossberg. Thank you all for attending!

Turning to our Board, I'd like to acknowledge two fantastic past chairmen: Wally Nathan and Peter Flanzer.

And our other Board members, including our newest members Amy Small, Eric Ephraim and Bobbie Hinden.

Our Advisory Council members who are here tonight, Patty Pell, Dan Pierce, and Larry Block,

And our new Associate Leadership Council, a group of younger members who have brought incredible energy and passion to our organization. Taryn Kessel and Ashley Kelly are here tonight representing the ALC.

There are several people who deserve our sincere thanks for tonight:

Our board member Sofia Alvarez, the chairman of tonight's wonderful event,

Our outstanding staff, Terri Olian, our Executive Director, and Deborah Brill, our administrative assistant,

Gayle Mandel, our PR consultant,

Our student photographers, Hailey Conner and Jillienne Ness,

The Highland Park Community House and Wendy Horwitch (we love this space!),

And a huge thanks to Sunset Foods, who provided all of tonight's food, beverages and décor free of charge, and special thanks to Sunset's event coordinator Jennifer McKinney.

Last, thank you to everyone here tonight: our generous donors, corporate sponsors and all the grant recipients! Each of you helps to enhance the quality of life for the residents of Highland Park and Highwood. Thank you all for being here and contributing to our wonderful community!

And now, I'd like to introduce Highland Park City Council member and City Liaison to our board, Alyssa Knobel, who would like to say a few words on behalf of Mayor Nancy Rotering.

Thank you, Alyssa. We are so appreciative of the City's support and of all that you personally do for us.

Last year, Alyssa was the recipient of the Foundation's Jack Blane Community Service Award. This year the award went to another very special woman, Patty Pell.

The award was presented at our Gather for Good fundraiser in September, but I'd like to take a moment now to acknowledge Patty's many contributions to our community. Through her involvement with the Community Foundation and YEA! Highland Park, and as a hands-on volunteer for many of the organizations here tonight, Patty has served our community so well! Everyone knows and loves Patty, and I hope you'll all join me in congratulating her.

Thank you, Patty!

Our second Foundation-sponsored award was initiated in 2018, the Personal Achievement Award, which honors a high school student who demonstrates perseverance toward personal goals when faced with obstacles or difficulties. For the 2019 award, we were proud to honor Arden Yacizi, who graduated from HPHS this past spring.

Our third and longest-running award is the HPCF Golden Apple Award, which annually recognizes an outstanding educator in the community. I'd like to turn the program over now to Sara Sher, who leads the team that identifies and selects the award recipient. Sara does an outstanding job and we hope she continues in her role forever!

Thank you, Sara and Patricia!

Turning now to our grant recipients, I'd like to introduce Alicia De La Cruz, the founder and coordinator of Working Together, an incredible program at HPHS.

She is also the Director of Client Services at the North Suburban Legal Aid Clinic, another one of our grantees. I asked Alicia to speak tonight because she has done so much for our community, and especially for those in need. In fact, in 2016, Alicia received the Highland Park Humanitarian Award in honor of her significant personal service to the community.

Thank you, Alicia!

One of the most rewarding parts of being involved with the Foundation is seeing the direct impact we have on people's lives. Tonight, we are going to hear from three outstanding HPHS students who have participated in several programs we support, Danna Blancas, Isa Cruz, and Xochitl Rodriquez. I think you'll enjoy hearing from them!

Thank you all for sharing your stories with us!

And now the moment many of you have been waiting for... Sofia Alvarez and David Reich, our vice chairman, will be presenting the grant awards for 2019!

As my chairmanship comes to an end, I'd like to give a special thanks to David for being a true partner and incredible leader, particularly as the Chairman of the Grants Committee. We completely overhauled our grants process this year and David did a fantastic job in leading the process. In addition, he has been a voice of calm and reason throughout the past two years as we greatly expanded the role of the Foundation in the community. I'm so grateful we've had this opportunity to work together!