

THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
of Shelby County

Build Today...Dream for Tomorrow

The Louise Sheets Fund

The late Louise Sheets did something very generous for the town she loved. She provided sizeable gifts in her will to several organizations and then left the remainder to the Community Foundation to continue to benefit the Botkins area and its needs. Questions arise about the Fund from time to time. Below are a few we've been asked.

Q: What is the purpose of the Louise Sheets Fund?

A: The Louise Sheets Fund was established by a statement in her will that gave the Community Foundation a gift to "be used for charitable purposes for the benefit of the Village of Botkins, Ohio, and the Botkins, Ohio area as said Foundation deems fit." The Foundation board decided to consider the area within the school district boundaries as the eligible area and to award grants based upon applications we receive.

Q: What organizations are eligible to receive a grant?

A: Any governmental or not-for-profit organization in or serving the Botkins area is eligible. Organizations are not required to have a 501(c)(3) exemption status from the IRS. Organizations without a 501(c)(3) status that receive grants from the Fund must provide us with additional paperwork that we could use to prove the grant money was used for a charitable purpose, should the IRS or auditors ask us for such proof. The additional paperwork is usually copies of invoices or receipts for items purchased as part of the grant.

Q: Are any organizations ineligible?

A: No organization is completely ineligible, but we hesitate to fund religious organizations for religious purposes, political organizations for political purposes, or general operating costs of existing organizations. In other words, the Fund will not likely purchase a new church organ, support promotional costs for a candidate or issue, or pay the monthly bills of an organization. If any of these organizations has a project that is open to the greater community, it may be considered for a grant. An example might be a food pantry operated by a church, but open to anyone regardless of whether they belong to the church.

Q: Is there a minimum or maximum amount or limit to the number of grants that may be requested by an organization?

A: No. As you can imagine, small requests are easier to finance than large ones, but the Fund has made large grants. We will consider grants of every size. If your organization has one or more projects that fit within the guidelines, we will review each request.

Q: Is there a committee of Botkins residents helping with the grants?

A: Yes. Mrs. Sheets did not ask that such a committee be created, but the Foundation board felt it would be a good idea to have local input. We have asked the several organizations and boards to send us a representative. The Foundation board has final say over grant decisions. This collaboration has worked well.

Q: What are some tips for creating a good grant request?

A: 1. Explain why the item or project is needed for the group your organization serves. For example, is this a safety need? Explain why. Will this be helpful to families? Tell us how. Help us understand why this item or project is necessary.

2. List the cost of items to be purchased with the grant money. An indication that you have tried to get the best price is always a good idea. Having a second or third quote for more costly items or projects is essential.

3. Attach a page or two, if available. A photo, copy of a catalog page, quote, diagram, or other items helps us understand the item, location, or costs.

4. Show that your group is working with and has the support of others in the community. A past successful application included the signatures of several organizations that were in support of the request. Showing that your group has support from other groups affected is especially important when asking to purchase items for land not owned by your group or when the project will directly impact another organization.

5. Give a number (if possible) and description of who will directly benefit. For example, is it older adults or teens in the Botkins area? Try to estimate how many people are in that group. Perhaps a count of the number of people who attended your event in the past would be a way of estimating.

Q: If our organization was turned down for a grant, can we apply in the future?

A: Yes! The Foundation sends a letter to organizations that are turned down briefly explaining why the grant was not funded. In some cases, your request was good, but the grant money was expended on others that were perceived to be higher priorities. If the nature of the project or lack of information caused the last grant to fail, try to learn from that and create a future request that better fits the guidelines.

Q: Can we request a multiple-year grant?

A: Yes. You may also ask that the Fund save money back for a few years to fund a large project. We like to support many community organizations and types of projects, so some very large grants could not be accomplished in a single year.

Q: What is the timeline for grant applications?

A: Applications are available beginning in June online at www.commfoun.com, and at the Village office, the High School office and the Library. The application deadline is **September 15, 2016**. The Community Foundation board decides upon grants at their October meeting and applying organizations are notified by the end of October. Once an organization signs and returns a letter of agreement, a check is issued within a few weeks.

Q: If we have questions about filling out a grant application, who can we call?

A: Call Marian Spicer, Executive Director of the Community Foundation of Shelby County at 497-7800 or email her at mspicer@commfoun.com. She is ready to help! She cannot predict whether a request will be funded, but she can give suggestions on the kind of information that should be included on the application.