

## TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE

Several years ago I read an inspiring story about a community foundation in Elkhart, Indiana, that received a gift from a former resident that transformed the town, community and people.

Guy David Gundlach was a world traveler and a giver to charities around the world, but he always considered Elkhart his home. That's why, when he died of a heart attack at age 56, he left nearly everything – a staggering gift of roughly \$125 million – to the Community Foundation of Elkhart County.

In an interview in 2012, Gundlach showed what a private man he was by downplaying his wealth, saying, "I made a bit of money in insurance, then came back to the states." Even his mother didn't realize how much money her son had. She knew some of his generosity, though, watching it develop through his life. "I thought it was outstandingly great because he wanted to share."

But what intrigued me at the time about his story was the transformational impact he made to his hometown. Gundlach understood that for his gift would be truly transformational for his hometown in perpetuity. His unrestricted fund has allowed many to graduate from college debt free, to improve the living experience for the young children in the Elkhart area, and award numerous Community Investment Grants that support the mission of the CFEC — to improve the quality of life in Elkhart County by inspiring generosity.

"From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked" (Luke 12:48). This statement of Jesus has become somewhat of an idiom in Western culture and is found, paraphrased, in Uncle Ben's words of wisdom to Peter Parker in Spider-man: "With great power comes great responsibility." Gundlach's transformational gift was visible proof that amassing great wealth led him to assume a feeling of responsibility to his hometown which had a part in his success. As one ages, grows, changes and learns, expectations change. A new, young employee in any area of work sees the expectations change as they learn the job. A kindergarten student has few expectations compared to this year's seniors. A new believer is considered a child in spiritual terms, but as the person matures in faith, more "fruit" should be seen and observed.

Transformational change has many connotations.

- For the agricultural producers in our area, the past two crop years as well as crop prices have been transformational in that many of these farmers have been able to pay off past debt, purchase more land or update machinery. By and large, in the area of agriculture, it means farmers can continue to feed our nation and the world.
- For a pastor, transformational might mean being able to watch a person come to saving grace.
- For a person in recovery, transformational means a life renewed and a daily decision to move forward without dependency.
- For a teacher, transformational could be seeing a student who once struggled with a concept or learning in general, reach career goals that might have seemed "pie in the sky" at an earlier time.
- For a person battling a serious health issue, transformational might mean hearing the words, remission, healed or cured.

- For a parent of a child, transformational could be the difference between one week old and one month old or between raising a toddler and enjoying an adult child.

In the world of community foundations, the word transformational is heard often in reference to a gift received by a nonprofit. The donations the nonprofits receive, often transform the nonprofit's ability to make a difference in the community. The Sabetha Food Pantry is only able to help feed those in need through the generous donations they receive. Generous donations will allow the Albany Historical Society to transform the Rock Creek Church by relocating it from Sycamore Springs to a site at Albany. Gifts made to the Kansas Honor Flight will allow several more veterans to make their trip to Washington D.C.

The Greater Sabetha Community Foundation exists to assist people who want to make positive, transformational changes for the Sabetha area. We invite you to be a part of transformational changes within our community through your charitable giving.