



Building Strong Foundations

The Family YMCA of Black Hawk County Is Transforming Childcare and Strengthening the Cedar Valley

For 158 years, the Family YMCA of Black Hawk County has been a place where generations have learned to swim, built lifelong friendships, and discovered healthier paths forward. But while many still think of the YMCA as a “gym and swim,” its impact reaches much deeper into the lives of families across the Cedar Valley. Today, the Y plays a critical role in shaping childhood development, supporting working parents, and opening doors to opportunities for all.

That mission came into sharper focus with the expansion and transformation of the YMCA Early Learning Center, which was an effort designed to respond to one of the community’s most urgent needs: access to high-quality childcare. As infant and toddler care shortages continue across Iowa, the YMCA made a choice to grow its capacity, where the community’s need is greatest.

“Parents still have to work,” said the Arwen Bendull Early Learning Center Director. “We meet the needs of parents who can’t find affordable care elsewhere. And for many families, these four, six, or eight hours could be one of the best parts of a child’s day.”

The Y’s redesigned Early Learning Center reflects a commitment to safety, accessibility, and high-quality learning environments. Each classroom now includes its own bathroom, more learning space, and age-appropriate areas designed to help children grow socially, emotionally, and academically. Families also appreciate the enhanced safety features, including secure access points, call buttons, and cameras that ensure only staff can enter the area.

The YMCA’s holistic approach extends far beyond classroom walls. Children benefit from unique opportunities

continued inside



A Plan for the Future

Kaye Englin
President and CEO

As we embark on our 70th year of service, I am filled with gratitude and hope for the next chapter in the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa's long history of being here for good. Over the past year and a half, we have listened deeply to nonprofits, community partners, donors, and neighbors across our region. What we heard was clear: the strength of our communities is rooted in connection, opportunity, and a shared commitment to ensuring every person can thrive.

Guided by these conversations and rooted in our values, we are excited to introduce our new strategic plan and refreshed impact priorities. These priorities reflect who we are today and who we aspire to be—an organization that unites grantmaking and community leadership to amplify the power of relationships, opens doors to opportunity, and empowers lasting change. They serve as our compass as we focus on creating places where people are not only cared for but are engaged in communities where everyone feels welcome and has the support they need to flourish.

Our new impact priorities are more than a framework. They are an invitation to join us in our mission.

For donors, they offer a clear way to identify what matters most to them and to channel their generosity into areas that reflect their values and hopes for the future.

For nonprofits, they provide support and recognition of the extraordinary work they carry out every day, while offering

confidence that CFNEIA stands beside them as a dedicated partner in creating stronger communities.

For our local community foundations and volunteer committees, they serve as a guide for digging deeper into local needs and making grant decisions that move their communities forward with purpose, ensuring the impact of every dollar makes a lasting difference for the places they call home.

This work is bigger than any single initiative or grant cycle. It is a collective effort shaped by generosity and driven by a vision of strong, connected communities where everyone can build a vibrant life. I am deeply grateful for the donors, partners, and nonprofit leaders who continue to walk alongside us. Your trust and commitment make this progress possible.

Thank you for being part of this transformative journey. Together, we are creating impact—now and for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Kaye Englin
President & CEO

here for good

GIVE

Give Online
cfneia.org/give

Mail a Check
CFNEIA
3117 Greenhill Circle
Cedar Falls, IA 50613

Consider a Planned Gift
There are many options to plan now for a gift later. Call our Development team at 319-287-9106 to learn more.

RECEIVE

What We Fund
We fund 501(c)(3) nonprofits and government entities working on projects that make the communities they serve stronger for all people. We do this through grantmaking in six core areas including arts and culture, community betterment, education and youth development, environment and animal welfare, health, and human service. Go to cfneia.org/grants to get more information and apply for grants.

CONNECT



319-287-9106



www.cfneia.org



info@cfneia.org



facebook.com/cfneia



linkedin.com/company/cfneia



[@communityfoundationNEIA](https://communityfoundationNEIA)

YMCA Building Strong Foundations article continued

made possible by being inside a full-service YMCA: regular physical activity, time on the indoor track and gym, gross motor play, yoga, and even free swim lessons. These experiences help children develop healthy habits early, something the YMCA sees as essential to lifelong well-being.

“Healthy aging doesn’t start at age 55,” said Norm Johnson, Chief Executive Officer. “The choices people make are the choices they know about. When we introduce healthier paths early, we expand what’s possible for every child.”

This childcare transformation became possible because of significant community support, including a \$180,000 grant awarded at CFNEIA’s Celebration of Community. The grant not only helped close the funding gap, it signaled to YMCA leadership that this work was vital to the region’s future.

“It really validated that what we’re doing is important,” Norm said. “This gift solidified our ability to pull everything together. It was an enormous impact.”

A major part of that support came from the Gary, Becky, Eric, and Elizabeth Bertch Family Fund, a donor advised fund held with CFNEIA. The Bertch family’s generosity and community vision has shaped countless Cedar Valley initiatives. Their leadership gift to the YMCA’s childcare transformation is already touching hundreds of lives.

“It’s truly a legacy gift,” said Norm. “Every year, new children and their families will benefit. In ten years, that impact is in the thousands.”

The YMCA also credits its long-standing partnership with the Community Foundation as essential in meeting local needs, particularly in programs like childcare and before and after-school care, which are vital but difficult to sustain financially.

“The Community Foundation makes the granting process easy and meaningful,” Norm shared. “They hold us accountable but also understand that supporting operating



“Our mission ends with two powerful words: for all. That guides everything we do. When we talk about access and opportunity, we don’t look at ability, creed, race, gender, or anything else—everyone is welcome here at the Y.”

Norm Johnson
CEO, Family YMCA of Black Hawk County

needs directly impacts families. I believe nonprofit leaders in the Cedar Valley feel grateful for that partnership.”

Today, the YMCA’s expanded Early Learning Center is more than a childcare program. It is a place where children learn, families find support, and a community invests in its shared future. It represents the power of generosity, the strength of partnerships, and a commitment to ensuring that all children, regardless of zip code, can access the safe, nurturing start they deserve. 🌈

A SCHOLARSHIP STORY: SAMANTHA HERRA-MORENO



Samantha Herrera-Moreno, a sophomore nursing student at the University of Northern Iowa, is driven by a passion to help others. Raised by her grandmother and aunt, she was inspired to become a nurse as a young child, after attending doctors’ appointments and helping her grandmother with cancer and diabetes treatments. Though she’s already working part time to pay for living expenses and coursework, she feels even closer to her goal, thanks to the Stitchman Education Scholarship. **Watch Samantha share her story at cfneia.org/samantha.**

2024 STITCHMAN EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

A Celebration of Community



More than 200 people who love their communities gathered at the Diamond Event Center in Cedar Falls on November 7 for the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa's Celebration of Community event. Neighbors, nonprofit leaders, donors, and community champions came together to celebrate the collective work being done to make our region a stronger, more vibrant place for all people.

At the event, CFNEIA awarded \$395,000 in mission fulfillment grants to four nonprofit organizations making lasting impact across our communities.

"These grants reflect the incredible work happening across our communities and the generosity that makes it possible," said Kaye Englin, president and CEO of CFNEIA. "Each organization we're supporting this year is creating lasting change that aligns with our mission to inspire people and connect resources to enrich our communities."

Mission Fulfillment Grant Recipients

Iowa Legal Aid – \$90,000 (Opportunity & Access)

Supporting a \$17.5 million campaign to expand services and create endowed attorney positions. The grant includes \$50,000 for the Iowa Legal Aid Endowment Fund held with CFNEIA, \$25,000 from Marv and Helen Schumacher, and \$15,000 from CFNEIA's Racial Equity Fund for a Black Hawk County Expungement Clinic.

UnityPoint Health, Allen Child Protection Center – \$50,000 (Health & Safety)

Supporting a \$1.5 million campaign to renovate a new facility serving children and families across 27 counties in Iowa.

Bremer County Fair – \$75,000 (Vibrant Communities)

Supporting the fair's \$10 million capital campaign to establish a new 50-acre fairground east of Waverly. The grant includes \$50,000 from CFNEIA and \$25,000 from CUSB Bank of Waverly for the new 4-H Community Building.

Family YMCA of Black Hawk County – \$180,000 (Youth Empowerment)

Supporting the YMCA's \$2 million capital campaign that expanded the Waterloo facility and relocated its Early Learning Center, which can now serve 74 children. A major portion of the grant comes from the Gary, Becky, Eric, and Elizabeth Bertch Family Fund held with CFNEIA. 🌍

👉 Go to cfneia.org/celebration25recap to see all the photos from the event and find more information on grant organizations and their projects.

2025 Scholarship Impact and 2026 Application Opening

2025 Scholarship Impact on Students



\$720,000+
in total scholarships
awarded



243
total scholarships
awarded



\$2,973
average amount
awarded

Our 2026 scholarship application opens next month, so now is the time to share this message with students, and parents of students, in your life. We're thrilled to be able to help students thrive during their academic careers, paving the way for bright futures, through these scholarships.

Our scholarship application process opens on January 10, 2026, so mark your calendars!

Visit cfneia.org/scholarships to learn more!

Our Impact Priorities

A CLEARER PATH. A STRONGER IMPACT. A SHARED VISION.

Our impact priorities unite grantmaking and community leadership to amplify the power of relationships, open doors to opportunities, and empower lasting change. We're more than a funding source. We connect donors, nonprofits, and community leaders to resources, expertise, and one another. Together, we're shaping a vibrant region of thriving people.



OPPORTUNITY & ACCESS

Everyone deserves the chance to reach their potential. We partner with organizations and actively work to remove barriers and expand pathways to opportunity so all people, especially those in underserved and rural areas, can access the resources and support needed for economic prosperity and upward mobility.



HEALTH & SAFETY

Every person has the right to live in a safe, stable, and healthy environment. We work with organizations providing essential health and human services, from emergency response and shelter to mental health support and food security. Investing in efforts that protect well-being and promote stability helps people lead healthier, safer lives.



VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

Vibrant communities are places where people want to live, work, and play. We connect and collaborate with people and organizations bringing neighborhoods to life through arts, culture, recreation, and economic development. By enhancing quality of life and fostering a sense of belonging, communities attract residents, businesses, and visitors.



YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

Young people are the future leaders and changemakers of our region. We support programs that provide educational opportunities, leadership development, and mentorship, helping youth gain the skills, confidence, and connections to thrive and lead in their communities.

Learn more at cfneia.org/impact-priorities


Important Tax Law Changes for Donors

The "One Big Beautiful Bill," signed into law on July 4, 2025, introduces several updates to charitable giving that take effect January 1, 2026.

While familiar rules such as the 60%-of-adjusted gross income (AGI) deduction limit for cash gifts and existing tax brackets remain unchanged, there are new provisions donors should note:

- **New deduction for non-itemizers:** Up to \$1,000 (individuals) or \$2,000 (married couples) can now be deducted for charitable gifts, though gifts to donor advised funds (DAFs) and private foundations don't qualify.
- **New "floor" for itemizers:** Charitable deductions apply only to giving above 0.5% of AGI.
- **Cap for top earners:** The value of deductions for those in the highest bracket is now limited to 35 cents per dollar.
- **Corporate giving floor:** Corporations can deduct only gifts exceeding 1% of taxable income.

These changes make 2025 an important year for charitable planning. Donors may benefit by accelerating contributions before the new rules take effect.

The Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa can help you explore giving options, such as donor advised funds, that make your philanthropy more impactful. 

- ✓ Contact our Charitable Impact Team at give@cfneia.org or 319-287-9106 to start the conversation. You can find a more detailed article on our website at cfneia.org/OBBBupdate.



**COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION
OF NORTHEAST IOWA**

here for good

3117 Greenhill Circle
Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613

The Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa helps inspired people make the impact they envision for their community, invests in nonprofits improving our quality of life, and provides leadership on key community issues to make Iowa communities stronger, more equitable places. Since 1956, we have been “here for good,” as a catalyst for positive change. Today, CFNEIA’s mission is carried out in 20 Iowa counties to meet local needs and fulfill a vision of creating a vibrant region of thriving people.

Our Mission

To inspire people and connect resources to enrich our communities.

Our Vision

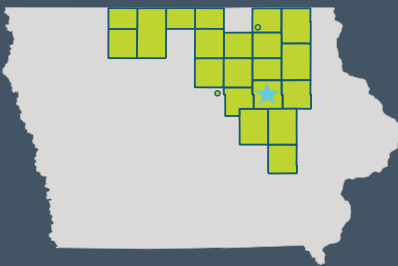
A vibrant region of thriving people.



319-287-9106 cfneia.org



CFNEIA's 20-county region



★ CFNEIA Office ■ Our Local Foundations

Ackley Community
Benton County
Black Hawk County
Bremer County
Buchanan County
Butler County
Cerro Gordo County
Chickasaw County
Elma Area Community
Emmet County
Fayette County
Floyd County

Franklin County
Grundy County
Howard County
Iowa County
Kossuth County
Palo Alto County
Tama County
Winnebago County
Winneshiek County
Worth County



Find our new strategic plan on our website.



Endow Iowa Tax Credit

CFNEIA is a qualified community foundation providing access to Endow Iowa Tax Credits. Taxpayers can receive a 25% Iowa tax credit though Endow Iowa in addition to normal federal charitable income tax deductions for certain charitable gifts. Learn more at cfneia.org/endowiowa.

CFNEIA is Confirmed in Compliance with National Standards for U.S. Community Foundations.

Our accreditation provides assurance that we have sound policies and practices in place. In short, it means we meet the highest standards for local giving.

CFNS

**ACCREDITED
FOUNDATION**