HOT TOPIC
WHAT IS WIREGRASS FOUNDATION?

Cindy and I have merged our columns for this Newsletter to provide a little more insight into what Wiregrass Foundation does, and why, and how. As we write, we realize how difficult it is to put all that into a few hundred words. Afterall, WF has $100 million dollars—why don’t we just “fix” everything? Truth is, there are so many needs and so many great ideas in our community, but only so much community capacity to transform and innovate at any given time. You, we, all of us, would like to do everything and do it all right away. But we know that is not possible. So—where does the Wiregrass Foundation start?

Ironically, many of our major investments (over $68 million to-date) started small—Glen East Senior Housing, the two Libraries, CapCONNECT, Bright Key, the Wiregrass Public Safety Center, etc... Because of the resources at our disposal, and because so many of you bring great ideas to our attention, we can make the time to listen and research, and because we have the resources to attract the best experts in the country right here to Dothan to work with our community leaders. One of my favorite quotations is by Maya Angelou: “Seek patience and passion in equal amounts. Patience alone will not build the temple. Passion alone will destroy its walls.” This does a good job of summing up the WF approach: in all major projects, we continually seek a balance between moving ahead with gusto seizing opportunities and being reflective enough to get things done right.

Recently, Wiregrass Foundation started a dialogue in our community regarding the future of “the arts”. To some this may seem like a relatively small impact area compared to the traditional big topics of poverty, education, public safety, and health. But it really is a matter of perspective. If we think of “the arts” mainly in terms of the play we saw last week, or the choir of which we are sometimes a member, or the picture on our refrigerator drawn by our child or grandchild at school, then “the arts” can be mistakenly reduced to an activity some --

2019 GRANT AWARD Year
GRANTS RECENTLY AWARDED
(April Meeting)

Dothan City Schools—Career Tech Assistance
$210,000 (over 3 yrs)

SE AL Child Advocacy Center—VOCA Match
$110,870 (over 18 mos)

Wiregrass Rehab Center—Mobile Video Surveillance
$40,000

Wiregrass Museum of Art—Tech Upgrade
$50,371
$159,184 in Micro-Grants to eighteen organizations,
Ongoing support for Foundation programs:
Bright Key and CapCONNECT
Wiregrass Public Safety Center &
the new Arts Initiative

of us do, some of the time. But stop for a moment and think bigger. As depicted in data compiled by Americans for the Arts, “the arts” has deep, relevant impact on every major facet of our lives:
https://americansforthearts.org/socialimpact

What if we realized the economic potential of the arts in business development and professional talent recruitment? What if the arts were critically integrated into children’s health services to foster major benefits? What if the arts became a staple in our schools alongside math and reading and was not the first thing cut from budgets (and lives) when fiscal times get tough? What if we stopped talking about our children (and ourselves) as either artist OR athlete OR academic, but realized all of us are (or can be) multi-faceted and multi-talented? What if “the arts” was no longer something we do; it is who we are? This is a conversation worth having across all sectors of our community—business, health, education, social services, government, etc...

We do not yet know where “the arts” conversations will lead. However, after 15 years of streamlining our investment process, we believe in this method of listening hard, researching best-practices, bringing in the best talent, and convening local people to consider new opportunities. And it is a model we intend to continue as we work with all of you to transform and innovate.