

WEST MIDLAND FAMILY CENTER Family Focus

VOLUME 27, NUMBER 1

Thriving, Giving, Growing ... Together

Spring 2017

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Breaking Rules and Busting at the Seams!

...by Greg Dorrien

Ordinarily, we have a rule of only asking donors for support once a year, but we're asking again because we're literally "busting at the seams." We need to expand and renovate our facility to continue to serve our constituents.



Greg Dorrien
Executive Director

This expansion and renovation project will provide expanded

childcare, preschool and after-school options for our community. It will help provide our struggling families with better clothing and food options. And it will deliver new security equipment to keep our community and staff safer. Overall, the project meets immediate needs while setting us up well for future growth.

The Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow, Rollin M. Gerstacker and The Charles J. Strosacker Foundations in Midland are great supporters and

...continued on page 2

Dow COP Welcomes Class of 2020

The Dow College Opportunity Program would like to officially welcome the **Class of 2020!** After a four month application process students from **Bullock Creek, Shepherd, and Coleman** high schools were selected based on their qualifications to become permanent members of the mentoring program. Program requirements are based in part on student's grades and attendance at Dow COP events for the first half of their freshman year. Selected students will be members of the program until they graduate from college or other post-secondary training! Edwin and Austin join us from Coleman High School, Savannah and Sophie attend Bullock Creek, and Melissa joins us from Shepherd. "It is always exciting to go through this process, mostly because it means we are adding more

...continued on page 2



The preschoolers see all the ongoing activity as an exciting giant sized sandbox complete with a big yellow cement truck!

Spotlight on Charles Infante

....by Ralph Wirtz

When Charles Infante joined **The Dow Chemical Company** in 1958, he left his job as a principal in the **Midland Public Schools**, but he didn't leave his calling for education behind. It followed him wherever his job with Dow took him, and his lifelong learning, continues today.

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www.wmfc.org

Dow COP Welcomes Class of 2020

...continued from page 1

amazing students into an incredible group of young people looking to change their lives through education,” said **Mike Sobolewski, Dow COP Program Director**. “It is sometimes tough to make the final selection, discussing each student and what they might bring to the group at large. However, we are all confident this group will be a wonderful addition to the current students in Dow COP.”

The Class of 2020 will be the 27th class of students to graduate. COP’s first graduating class was the class of 1993, which was a part of **Education Assistance Limited**. Congratulations to the incoming class, we are all looking forward to working with you and sharing in your journey!



*Incoming Dow COP Class of 2020 COP
Edwin, Austin, Melissa, Sophie, and Savannah*

Dow COP Student Uses CPR Skills In Family Emergency...by Sasha

*Sasha, an 11th grade student at **Bullock Creek High School** recently used the CPR skills that she learned in the **Dow College Opportunity Program, (COP)** in the real life emergency of a family member. Here is her story in her own words:*

I can’t recall the exact time that the call for help reached my room that Friday morning. I heard the panic filled scream of a family friend, Amanda, followed by the chaos of finding my grandfather unresponsive. I ran into the room and pushed my way to the scene. Many people crowded around...one announced that she was trained in CPR and started to step up to help. I was also certified in CPR and the use of an AED, so shaking, I moved in to help assist her. Once she touched my grandpa she screamed and began to cry exclaiming, “I can’t, I can’t! He’s dead, he’s not breathing, I can’t!” All of a sudden it hit me that I had to step up. There was no time to think it through, simply to act.

I barked out orders to my father to get my grandfather on his back on the ground and then scanned my grandfather’s body while sitting on my knees. As I moved his arm to the

side to begin compressions, blood smeared on my hand and made my insides squirm, but there was no time to mind that as I quickly got to work. Adrenaline punched through me. This wasn’t like doing CPR on a training mannequin, this was real. I felt the popping and cracking that signified the sufficient depth of my



Sasha enjoying time off during a recent Dow COP trip to volunteer at Mackinaw Island.

compressions. The cracking resonated through me...it was something that I knew would likely haunt me for a long time to come. I kept up the compressions but when it came time to breath for him, in all honesty, I didn’t think that I could do it. I looked at Amanda as I did my final few compressions of the first set. She came near his head and I instructed her how to tilt his head back, pinch his nose and breathe for him. Amanda became a real hero. I heard my mother talking on the phone and answering questions. As

...continued on page 7

Breaking Rules and Busting at the Seams! *...continued from page 1*

have already promised \$3.25 million toward this effort. And since participation by the public insures that projects have public support, we’re asking individuals in our community to help us raise the remaining \$250,000, (with each \$1 donation matched by \$1.50 from The Charles J. Strosacker Foundation). “*Busting at the Seams!*” is the theme for this supplemental fundraising effort. A brochure outlining the fundraising initiative and a donation card

are included with this issue of the **Family Focus**. We hope many readers will consider a first or second donation in 2017 to help us reach our goal.

This is my 30th year with West Midland Family Center, and I must say that optimism was the prevailing sentiment for the organization long before I arrived. **Dorothy Arbury** (our eternal guardian angel) and **Charles Infante** (see related story

on page 1) were the first to answer the appeal from our board of directors (led by **Win Zacharias** and **Executive Director Phyllis Breedlove**) for an endowment fund and a new facility, respectively. What a pleasure it has been these last 30 years to witness the outpouring of love from our many supporters, as they have helped ensure a better future for each family walking through our doors.

2016/17 Financial Donors (through April 30, 2017)

A

Anonymous Donations Received by 48
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John and Pat Zimmerman

Zonta Club of Midland



The following people have included WMFC in their estate plan (will, life insurance or living trust) or have already fulfilled their Legacy Society donation.

Orrin and Eleanor Barrett*

Jim Burlingame*

Helen (Kennedy) Burns*

Carl Coons

Greg & Robyn Dorrien

Virginia Harlow*

Kenneth E. Livernois*

Bernie Meister

V. Bruce Miller

John Reder*

Edward & Elyse Rogers

Diane & Robert Tomczak

Win Zacharias*

Other Anonymous Donors

*Deceased

Spotlight on Charles Infante ...continued from page 1

"I have grandchildren that I'm still learning from today," he said. "It's amazing."

Certainly, his volunteer footprint is as big at **West Midland Family Center** as it is anywhere in **Midland County**, or in the state for that matter. He was the contributions officer for the The Dow Chemical Company when three members of the **WMFC Board of Directors, President Win Zacharias, Director Phyllis Breedlove and Assistant Director Greg Dorrien** approached him in 1987 for a \$50,000 donation, and explained to him their vision for a new, bigger center. Infante arranged for members of the area foundations to get together to talk about financing the \$1.8 million request.

"In about 45 minutes in the offices there on **West Main Street (Pardee House)** we divvied up \$1.8 million," Infante said.

"They used to go around individually and talk about these things and eventually you'd get to some number," Dorrien explained, "but what Chuck is saying is that this was the first time the foundations all got together and hashed out how it should come down. The Center was completed in 1989 and Infante was a champion for the Center in those negotiations," continued Dorrien, "and he has been a champion ever since."

Dow COP Student Uses CPR Skills in Family Emergency ...continued from page 2

I continued CPR for several more minutes, I was so exhausted and in so much pain that I thought I might start crying, but I didn't have that luxury. Amanda started crying and mumbling to herself. I told her to pull herself together and breathe for my grandfather and, when I regained enough strength to speak with clarity, I gently encouraged her between breaths. Thoughts flashed through my mind...I kept thinking about the AED we didn't have,

Infante's contributions have been fruitful for the community, including strengthening the lives of all the graduates of the **Dow College Opportunity Program (Dow COP)**, an idea Infante borrowed from Illinois. The program assists students in the **Bullock Creek, Coleman, Shepherd and Meridian** school districts beginning in the ninth grade and continuing through college graduation, providing mentors, academic support, cultural exposure, volunteering and travel and social development. Chuck organized the program, then sought funding. That principle – first solve a problem, then seek funding for it – has been Infante's mantra throughout his charitable activities, too numerous to outline in this space, but we will name a couple.

In 1990, Infante helped organize the people who made the **Greater Midland North Family Center** happen in Mills Township. In recognition of his work there, the NFC annually recognizes a volunteer the **Charles Infante Volunteer of the Year Award**.

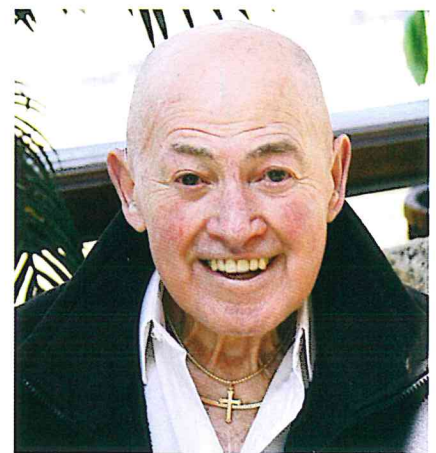
In 1994, he brought people together to plan educational and recreational field trips after finding out students were missing out because of a lack of transportation. In the mid-1990s, he was appointed by **Gov. John Engler** to be a member of the **Michigan Community Service Commission**.

and how my grandfathers chances would have been significantly better if we had one. Nearly half way through, I was instructed to focus on compressions. I told Amanda to step back and that she had done well. I kept up my compressions although I desperately needed to stop; my body felt like fire and I was in so much pain. I remember thinking sarcastically "*and I thought the two minutes on a manikin was tiring!*". I was so focused on my

In September of 1995, Infante received an award named for his friend, **Rev. Glenn E. Baumann**. Upon accepting the prestigious **Rev. Glenn E. Baumann Award for Community Service**, Infante said, "I'm very humbled."

His well-rounded life is apparent in his home that he shares with wife Vicki. Pictures of his children and grandchildren adorn the shelves and walls, and some of his awards hang in his basement office.

During his 36-year career at Dow, Infante worked in sales, and it appears his problem solving skills served him well there, too. In 1992, Infante was inducted into the **Hall of Fame for Styrofoam Brand Products** for his instrumental role in developing and commercializing Styrofoam brand sheathing in residential construction.



Charles Infante

task that I never saw the door open and the EMT's rush in until a woman took my place doing compressions.

The EMT's did everything they could to save my grandfather that day, but unfortunately he died. I'm proud of my decision to act and to do what I knew to do. Knowing that I was able to do something to try to help my grandfather makes that experience a little less painful to remember.



A group of Dow COP students practice their newly acquired CPR skills on Dow COP Director, Mike Sobolewski. (Just kidding, this photo was completely staged, no CPR was performed on Mr. Mike!)

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WMFC Recognizes Outstanding Volunteers

Breanna Cross, recipient of the **Steven Barstow Youth Volunteer of the Year Award**, is a Senior at Bullock Creek High School. A member of Dow COP since 2013, Breanna truly knows the importance of volunteering within her community. Her attitude during activities both at the



Breanna Cross

Center and in the community at large sets her apart from other high school students. She always reaches out to help others, inspires younger students to get involved and generally wants to make the world a better place for all of us. Breanna will be attending **Delta College** in the fall to participate in the dental hygiene program.



Sherry Sian

Sherry Sian, recipient of the **Phyllis Breedlove Friend of the Center Award**, is a long time West Midland community member and a neighborhood change agent. She was one of the first employees hired when WMFC took up residence in the original building. Sherry reconnected with WMFC at a WMFC Spa Event after which she offered to help in the WMFC Clothing Room. Sherry is also a board member of the **Friends of Whispering Pines**, where she has been instrumental in forming a teen volunteer group. Under Sherry's tutelage, teens help neighbors in need by mowing lawns and planting flowers in the summer and shoveling driveways in the winter. Sherry is an outstanding role model. Her zeal for community giving is contagious and an extraordinary gift to the youth with whom she works.

Louise Fair, recipient of the **Orrin Barrett Volunteer of the Year Award**, is a wonderful addition to the WMFC 4's Preschool program. Every Wednesday, the children look forward to seeing 'Miss Louise'. Over the last three years, Louise has put in countless hours reading to little children. She comes to the class equipped with stories that she has actually authored! The children have learned a great deal from Louise. They thoroughly enjoy her stories and the time she spends in the classroom. Louise is an excellent example of the importance of inter-generational interaction. She exemplifies a loving grandparent for those children without a grandparent living nearby.



Louise Fair