

CAUSE CONNECTION

Connecting people who care to causes that matter

Focus on Foundation-Directed Leadership Grantmaking

CORE Fellowship | Fostering Inclusive Leadership and Developing Equitable Organizations

This past year was an exciting year for the CORE Fellowship Program. The program was launched in July 2022, and through two different cohorts, nearly 50 fellows have participated, representing around 24 institutions. LVCF is planning the start of a third cohort in the summer of 2024.



The [CORE Fellowship Program](#) is a two-year capacity building process designed to bring Lehigh Valley nonprofit leaders together to center equity in themselves, their relationships, their organizations, and the sector. The intended impact of the fellowship are the following: 1) that each fellow will develop the skills, understanding, and capacity for inclusive leadership 2) that organizations will further their work in centering equity, having a plan and resources to understand how best to build their

own capacity both in the fellowship and beyond 3) that a diverse set of leaders will build and deepen relationships leading to a powerful social network of changemakers emerging. In turn, these individuals, organizations, and networks will harness their collective power to make equitable change in the nonprofit sector. See what [CORE Fellows have to say](#) about the program.

As a part of the CORE Fellowship, organizations and fellows receive general operating funding, participate in nearly 50 hours of cohort convening over two years, receive five hours of individual leadership coaching, and participate in an organizational equity discovery process to assess the organization in how to best build capacity to become more equitable, resulting in an individualized organizational roadmap for how to do the work.

Overall, LVCF believes that the impact of the fellowship is powerful, important, and urgent. During the November 2023 National Day of Philanthropy Breakfast, organized by the Association of Fundraising Professionals of the Lehigh Valley, the Lehigh Valley Community Foundation was recognized as [Foundation of the Year](#) due to the impact of the CORE Fellowship program. This recognition demonstrates the importance of the fellowship in the wider community after only one year. LVCF is looking forward to seeing the long-lasting impact.



Christmas | Hanukkah | Kwanzaa

As we come to the end of 2023, we have two simple words for our donors, board members (past and present), and friends and associates—**thank you**.

Thank you for entrusting your philanthropy with us and allowing us to connect you to the causes you care about most.

Thank you for allowing us to build a stronger community by helping you fulfill your charitable vision and grow a charitable legacy.

Thank you for enabling us to fund nonprofits and partner in the community to improve the quality of life in our region as a trusted and respected grantmaker.

It's your support that made it possible for us to share our community knowledge, leadership and expertise as we helped build capacity in nonprofits and direct funding where it was needed most. For all this we say—**thank you**

**Your Partners at Lehigh Valley
Community Foundation**

“In the current time of polarization, the fellowship’s work to bring diverse people together in better understanding and appreciation of our many differences, in addition to understanding of our own and each other’s humanity is urgent, especially for those who work on the front line of making change in our community every day,” said **Megan Briggs**, Vice President of Community Investment. “The fellowship’s ability to provide the structure and space to heal, repair, understand, and grow our own selves and also our relationships is the way we can make long-lasting and meaningful change.”

Early Childhood Care: Working towards high-quality, accessible childcare

During 2023, LVCF deepened our commitment to working collaboratively to address the crisis in the Early Childhood Care sector. In March 2023, [LVCF announced 12 grant awards](#), distributing nearly \$200,000 to organizations that are working towards providing high-quality, accessible childcare. LVCF also awarded 3 of the 12 organizations with a 3-year multi-year grant award. **Alisa Baratta**, Executive Director of Third Street Alliance, one of the three recipients of the multi-year grant award, demonstrates the importance of the award by saying, “The Foundation’s multi-year general operating grant supports our ability to build a strong and sustainable infrastructure for our early childhood program. For example, we’re able to take risks and pilot new initiatives related to curriculum development and family engagement. This support also helps us advance our equity goals by allowing us to invest in living wages salaries for staff in our early learning program—a sector with a female-dominated workforce that has long been notoriously underpaid.”



LVCF recently launched a [new cycle of grant funding](#), which will support nonprofits addressing some of the root causes of the early childhood issue. During this fall, both **Erika Riddle Petrozelli**, LVCF’s President and CEO, and **Megan Briggs** met with over 20 early childhood stakeholders to understand the current crisis, early childhood landscape, and how best the LVCF could help. During these meetings, LVCF learned more about the root causes of the early childhood crisis, such as the issue with low pay for the entire field leading to workforce shortages, the increasingly complex behavioral and mental health diagnosis of children, and the lack of sufficient revenue sources to sustain high-quality programs. We learned about how this issue intersects with several impact areas including supporting babies and families, workforce development, overall economic well-being, transportation, and health.

We also learned about the efforts that local leaders are working on to address these challenges. LVCF is now developing the foundation’s strategies that will help bolster the collective efforts to provide high-quality, accessible childcare for all Lehigh Valley families. We look forward to not only distributing grants in this area, but also utilizing our staff time, our voice, our positioning, and our resources to make an impact in the early childhood space.

Arts, Culture & Creative Economy

During 2023, LVCF continues to redistribute state grant funding through the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts (PCA) Partners in the Arts program for Carbon, Monroe, Lehigh, and Northampton counties. LVCF manages two distinct opportunities for funding through this program. The [Creative Entrepreneur Accelerator Program](#) helps creative entrepreneurs to grow their small business, audience, and revenue by providing \$2,000 grants. Since the grant launched in late 2021, over \$100,000 has been distributed to over 50 creative entrepreneurs. LVCF also launched the Creative Flex Fund, a new PCA program in the summer of 2023, which is designed to address the changing needs of dynamic Pa. arts organizations by providing grantees the flexibility to use \$5,000 grants in ways that ensure the most significant impact for their organizations and communities. [LVCF distributed \\$105,000 to 22 organizations in November 2023](#), and looks forward to understanding the impact of this funding.

Throughout the year, LVCF’s Assistant Director of Community Investments, **Monique Saunders Moreno**, (with Zoellner’s Mark Wilson below) joined several different working groups and panels focused on creating awareness and advocating for a vibrant, sustainable arts, culture, and creative economy sector. A highlight was the **Pennsylvania Arts & Humanities: A Statewide Convening** hosted at Zoellner Arts Center, for which Monique served as an Marketing Working Group member. LVCF is looking forward to continuing to partner with the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts to support the region’s arts, culture, and creative economy sector.

