

News Release



Community Foundation
of Morgan County, Inc.

For Release: January 24, 2016

\$225,000 Donated to Support Vocational Programming at MSD of Martinsville Schools

MARTINSVILLE, IND. -- A group of local philanthropists represented by William Blaschke have established the [Endowment Fund for Parallel Pathways and Education in Morgan County](#) with a \$225,000 donation to the [Community Foundation of Morgan County](#). This endowment has been established to honor the memory of Robert D Blue Jr., who was a life-long educator and philanthropist, and will initially benefit vocational training at the [Metropolitan School District of Martinsville](#).

Based on the belief that education and job training are essential tools in eradicating poverty and improving the quality of life for future generations, this endowment will help to realize the potential of Morgan County young adults by providing funds for student vocational training. This training may include soft skills such as appropriate business attire, business communication, and time management skills. Additionally, funding will supplement and enhance vocational training for jobs opportunities that pay a living wage. Such employment may include jobs in metal work, wood working, electrical, plumbing, mechanical, etc..

As not all students plan on attending college, it is essential to show young adults the parallel pathways that are available to them without obtaining a 4-year degree from a college or university.

Blaschke stated, "With the right training, young adults can obtain good paying jobs that are in demand, and not have to settle for low-paying service jobs in fast food or retail that have little to no career advancement opportunities. And, those jobs are right here in Morgan County!"

Blaschke continued, "Additional benefits include fewer people relying on government supplemented social services, which would allow for a decrease in governmental spending and an increase in tax-revenue within Morgan County. We would also be able to retain and increase the growth of local companies in the county, because well-trained individuals are readily available for employment. It is a win-win situation, and it is long term!"

The Community Foundation of Morgan County is working to bring together community leaders and their philanthropic vision in order to pool resources that will provide opportunities for coordinated long-term impact. This donation is the first major step in achieving this goal.

Ed Kominowski, Executive Director of the Community Foundation of Morgan County stated, "This generous donation is a monumental step towards establishing a program that will help alleviate poverty by providing skilled trades for residents of Morgan County, beginning with the Metropolitan School District of Martinsville."

Kominowski continued, "This is really going to be an emerging opportunity for the Community Foundation of Morgan County to serve as a leader in the community. We want to help prevent poverty in the county, and one way of doing that is by getting generations of Morgan County residents trained to take jobs that are currently available, so they can support their families. This, along with the support of existing non-profit organizations that serve the needs of our population will improve the economic makeup of our community."

(more)

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Metropolitan School District of Martinsville Superintendent, Michele Moore commented that the school system currently offers a wide array of vocational programming from business courses, to precision machining, to agriculture, and more.

Recent examples of these offerings include the [Girls to Women](#) event that brought together 8th grade girls from [John R. Wooden Middle School](#) and local female leaders from a variety of career fields. This event was co-sponsored by the MSD of Martinsville and the [Greater Martinsville Chamber of Commerce](#). Students are also actively learning tech skills through the school system's [CoderDojo](#), a global movement of free, volunteer-led, community-based programming clubs where students can learn to code, build a website, create an app or a game and explore technology in an informal, creative and social environment.

Moore stated, "We hope to use the funds from this endowment to help us implement workplace ethics, skills training (soft skills), and to increase our internship program, as well as expand the vocational programming in other areas."

Moore continued, "Parallel pathways--it is a philosophy for us-- recognizing that we need to get students on career pathways, because some students will finish their educational training with a vocational certificate, some an internship or apprenticeship, some may obtain a four year degree, while others may go on to complete a doctorate degree-- it's not about work vs. college-- we're *all* going to be workers-- it's about what path do you take to get there?"

About Robert D. Blue Jr.

Robert D Blue Jr. was born September 28, 1937 in Niagara Falls, NY to the late Robert Darwin and Mavel May (Tatlock) Blue. He died August 27, 2013 at IU Health Morgan Hospital in Martinsville, Indiana.

Blue served his country honorably in the US Army Corps from 1962 until 1968 with high security clearance. He worked as a Senior Systems Analyst at the University of Michigan, where he taught for 41 years. He was also a mathematics tutor, mathematician and a licensed Amateur Radio Operator. Blue was awarded the *Distinguished Teaching Scholar Award* prior to receiving his master's degree from the University of Michigan.

Blue truly believed that education was the key to solving poverty in the community. He tutored many students in the Martinsville area for free after he retired, and served on the [Morgan County Public Library](#) Foundation Board. There is a bench and marker located in front of the Morgan County Public Library in Martinsville dedicated to Blue as a champion of the library. He quietly gave financially to individuals in need, the local hospital and local library, among others.

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