

Grantmakers of Kentucky 2025 Meeting

Crafting a New Narrative:

Stories of Trust,
Resilience & Action



July 29-30, 2025 | Paducah, Kentucky

**GRANTMAKERS
OF KENTUCKY**

In partnership with Philanthropy Southeast

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Welcome to Paducah!

Fellow Kentucky Grantmakers,

We are so excited to finally bring the Grantmakers of Kentucky meeting to Paducah, one of our state’s most vibrant communities – and a UNESCO Creative City!

Paducah has had many identities throughout its history: a river and rail shipping hub, an “Atomic City” with a large uranium enrichment plant and, today, a city that’s best known for its thriving craft and folk art community, including the National Quilt Museum. As times have changed, so has Paducah – the city has adopted new narratives that have allowed it to thrive to the present day.

Narratives within our Commonwealth and within the field of philanthropy are evolving. The questions for us, as Kentucky grantmakers, are what role will we play in shaping the next chapters of these stories and how will we communicate them.

We’ll explore these questions in depth over the next two days, examining the role of stories and storytelling through a variety of lenses, including policymaking, disaster preparedness, the health of the nonprofit sector, and local journalism. Each of these areas are unique; however, like a patchwork quilt, they can be woven together by a common thread: Stories and narratives are essential to our success in all of them.

Along the way, we hope each of you has the opportunity to strengthen old bonds and create some new ones with your fellow Kentuckians. The best networks are those that are tightly woven – strong, resilient, and capable of supporting not only one another, but also communities across the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

Grantmakers of Kentucky 2025 Planning Committee

Chris Dockins (co-chair)
Community Foundation of West Kentucky

Sharon LaRue (co-chair)
Kentucky Foundation for Women

Gina Leeper (co-chair)
Ray & Kay Eckstein Charitable Trust

Kathy Allen
Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky

Kristin Walker Collins
Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky

Sara Hemingway
Marilyn & William Young Charitable Foundation

Beth Jones
Greater Clark Foundation

Kathy Knotts
Gheens Foundation

Anne Monell
Legacy Foundation of Kentuckiana

Will Ousley
Jewish Heritage Fund

Mason Rummel
James Graham Brown Foundation

Chelsea VanHook
Community Foundation of Louisville

Joanie Van Horn
Felix E. Martin Jr. Foundation

Keith Wardrip
James Graham Brown Foundation

Jennifer Wethington
Community Foundation of South Central Kentucky

Meredith Zahirovic
Felix E. Martin Jr. Foundation

Speakers



Scan to learn more about this year’s speakers and panelists!

In Attendance



Scan to see who’s here in Paducah!

About the 2025 Meeting

For the first time, Grantmakers of Kentucky brings its meeting to Paducah, a UNESCO Creative City known for its vibrant craft and folk art community. During a time defined by uncertainty and threats to the charitable sector, we come together to discuss how our state's philanthropic leaders can help craft a new narrative by embracing the power of storytelling. We'll look at the stories grantmakers tell about themselves, as well as how we can support others – including nonprofits and local media – in telling stories that promote trust, resilience and action.

About Grantmakers of Kentucky

Grantmakers of Kentucky was created to help foster connections and cooperation among foundations and between funders and policy makers, as well as to inform grantmakers about the possibilities – and potential challenges – that lie ahead in our state. Through our programming, grantmakers have the opportunity to connect with their fellow Kentucky colleagues, share best practices, discover new resources and increase the state's grantmaking impact.

About Philanthropy Southeast

Philanthropy Southeast is the premier philanthropic network for courageous leaders, ideas and resources focused on the American South and U.S. Caribbean territories. We connect our members to experts, innovations and best practices in philanthropy while promoting peer-to-peer learning and leadership development. By coming together, we spark transformative work that achieves lasting impact, advances equity, and builds a brighter future for the South, its communities and all its people.

Statement of Purpose: Philanthropy Southeast strives to connect the region's philanthropic leaders with a diverse and inclusive range of information, resources, experts, innovations and best practices while promoting peer-to-peer learning and leadership development. While we may not necessarily endorse the opinions and views of those we work with, we engage with them to promote vibrant and open discussion. We believe it is necessary to have these conversations for the sake of increasing philanthropy's impact throughout the region.

Code of Conduct: Philanthropy Southeast is composed of a broad and diverse membership of grantmakers. At our core, we are a community of grantmakers connecting with each other to improve the practice of grantmaking in the Southeast.

At our meetings and events, we also welcome visitors from other organizations – which are not members – that participate as presenters or participants. Philanthropy Southeast strives to create a comfortable place for all Members, visitors, and others engaged in philanthropy to exchange experiences and ideas and engage in conversations that are welcoming and of benefit to all participants. As such, Philanthropy Southeast is not a venue for grant seekers, fundraisers, or other types of charitable solicitations during any of its meetings, events or through its publications nor is it an appropriate venue to conduct political activities. We ask that our Members and visitors not solicit at Philanthropy Southeast-sponsored events or programs and that Members and visitors not use information obtained through their Philanthropy Southeast membership or participation in Philanthropy Southeast events for charitable, business or other solicitations outside of those events.



Program Agenda

Tuesday, July 29

Note: Tuesday's programming will begin at the Holiday Inn Paducah Riverfront (600 North Fourth Street, Paducah, KY 42001) before groups depart for the Paducah Learning Tour.

11:00am-12:00pm	Registration & Lunch
12:00-12:30pm	Welcome to Paducah – a UNESCO Creative City! Experience firsthand Paducah's cultural assets and the commitment to immersing visitors in these authentic characteristics. You'll learn why Paducah is one of nine UNESCO Creative Cities in the United States and among over 300 worldwide. Welcoming Remarks: • Fowler Black – Director of Operations, Paducah Convention & Visitors Bureau • Emily Black – Founder, Atomic City Voice Studio, and Co-Founder, The Paducah Singers
12:30-1:15pm	Intentional Networking & Orientation
1:15-2:30pm	Building Trust with Policymakers Using the Science of Storytelling You're already doing the work of helping your communities thrive. Now let's make sure you can talk about it in a way that builds buy-in and trust with a key audience: policymakers. This workshop will help you use stories and data to communicate the value of philanthropy and charitable giving. It builds on research from "Philanthropy's New Voice," the largest study of narratives in philanthropy, which examined what types of stories are more likely to build trust, what policymakers want to know from foundations, and how to describe the work foundations do clearly and transparently. Speakers: • Nicole Bronzan – Vice President, Communications and Content, Council on Foundations • Ann Searight Christiano – Founder & Director, Center for Public Interest Communications
2:30-3:00pm	Transition to Learning Tour Transportation
3:00-5:30pm	Paducah Learning Tour Groups will travel via trolley to sites highlighting Paducah's history, arts and culture. The tour includes these sites: • The Hotel Metropolitan • Lincoln Station Project • Paducah Symphony Orchestra • The Art & Life of Helen LaFrance • National Quilt Museum See pages 5 and 6 for more details about our Learning Tour destinations!
5:30-6:30pm	Opening Reception at the National Quilt Museum (215 Jefferson St.)
6:30pm	Depart for Dinner
6:30-8:30pm	Dinner at Stella's (202 Broadway St.) – Requires pre-registration <i>Stella's is a 3-minute walk from the National Quilt Museum. For those not joining us for dinner, a shuttle to the Holiday Inn will depart from the National Quilt Museum at 6:30pm.</i>
8:30pm	Shuttle from Stella's to the Holiday Inn

Wednesday, July 30

Note: Wednesday's programming will take place at the Walker Hall Event Center (229 Madison St, Paducah, KY 42001), a 5-minute walk from the Holiday Inn. If you need transportation, the Philanthropy Southeast staff will be able to assist you.

8:30-9:00am	Registration & Breakfast <i>During breakfast, there will be an opportunity to engage in tabletop discussions around several topics pre-selected by attendees. Join your peers for these informal discussions.</i>
9:00-9:15am	Opening Remarks
9:15-10:30am	Telling Stories in a Traumatic Moment: Communication & Connectivity in Disaster Preparedness Place-based funders are likely to find themselves as key stakeholders in community recovery after a disaster strikes their geographical service area. Why? Because such an event threatens to eliminate decades of local philanthropic investment in mere minutes. A recent study released by the U.S. Chamber Foundation and Allstate reported that "every \$1 spent in preparedness saves \$13 in recovery." This panel discusses the importance of establishing a civic infrastructure of communication and connectivity into a community before disaster strikes. Panel: • Cari Cullen – Program Officer, Domestic Funds, Center for Disaster Philanthropy • Ryan Drane – Founding Principal, Blue Sky Global • Sue Marticek – Founder and Executive Director, Compass 82 Moderator: • Chris Dockins, Ph.D. – Chief Operating Officer, Community Foundation of West Kentucky
10:30-10:45am	Break
10:45-11:45am	Navigating Change: Kentucky's Nonprofit Sector & Philanthropy's Role in an Ever-Shifting Landscape Danielle Clore, founder and CEO of the Kentucky Nonprofit Network, will provide an insider's perspective on the evolving policy environment impacting nonprofits, including the latest federal tax legislation updates and executive orders affecting the sector. Using a live interactive platform, attendees will have the opportunity to submit questions in real-time, fueling a dynamic conversation. This session challenges grantmakers to rethink philanthropy's role – not just as funders, but as partners willing to share risks and responsibilities to ensure impactful programs and services for Kentuckians and communities. Together, we will explore how philanthropy can fill critical gaps and strengthen Kentucky's nonprofit ecosystem during these transformative times. Speaker: • Danielle Clore – Founder & CEO, Kentucky Nonprofit Network
11:45am-12:30pm	Lunch
12:30-1:00pm	Introduction to Press Forward The steady and significant decline in the availability of reliable, fact-based local news across the country is connected to growing threats to democracy, increasing polarization, and the spread of disinformation. At the same time, over a decade of investment in journalism experimentation and transformation have produced new models and solutions that are ready to scale, and a new generation of leaders prepared to reinvent and revitalize the field. Press Forward partners are moving from individual grantmaking strategies to a shared vision and coordinated action. Press Forward is a national coalition investing more than \$500 million to strengthen local newsrooms, close longstanding gaps in journalism coverage, advance public policy that expands access to local news, and scale the infrastructure the sector needs to thrive. Speaker: • Christina Shih Associate Director, Press Forward

Program Agenda

Wednesday, July 30

1:00-1:15pm	Break
1:15-2:30pm	Supporting Local News From the Ground Up: How Press Forward Blue Grass is Building a Holistic Model for Community Information Press Forward Blue Grass, one of over 40 chapters in the national Press Forward movement, is taking a bold, regionally rooted approach to revitalizing local news across 16 counties in Central and Appalachian Kentucky. Housed at the Blue Grass Community Foundation, the chapter is weaving together civic engagement, education and workforce development, pooled philanthropy, and journalism training programs to create a sustainable and inclusive news ecosystem, all while stepping into the work of building an endowment for a sustainable local news future. This panel brings together journalists, funders, and fundraising strategists who are building this model in real time. Learn how Press Forward Blue Grass is not only supporting existing newsrooms but also growing the next generation of local journalists from within the communities they serve. Whether you're looking to fund local news and information, or replicate this approach in your own region, this is a conversation you won't want to miss. Panel: • Kevin Corcoran – Strategy Director, Lumina Foundation • Dr. Melissa Newman – Strategy Advisor, Press Forward Blue Grass • Christina Shih – Associate Director, Press Forward Moderator: • Ben Chandler – Trustee, James Graham Brown Foundation, Owner of <i>The Woodford Sun</i>, and Senior Advisor, Press Forward Blue Grass
2:30-3:00pm	Closing Remarks
3:00pm	Adjourn & Departures

Paducah Learning Tour

This year's meeting includes a tour of locations central to Paducah's history, arts and culture. Attendees will be divided into groups for the start of the tour before coming back together at our final stop, the National Quilt Museum, which will also host our reception. Stops on the tour include:



The Hotel Metropolitan

The Hotel Metropolitan is a cornerstone of Paducah's rich history and culture. Established in 1908, this historic hotel served as a gathering place for prominent African American figures during the Jim Crow era, acting as a refuge and hub for civil rights discussions and community events. History comes alive today through the experiential living history tour entitled "Ms. Maggie's Memories." In costume and character as the hotel's fiery founder, Ms. Maggie Steed, Executive Director Betty Dobson welcomes visitors for an unforgettable experience, sharing memories of a segregated culture, the hotel's world-famous guests, and the contributions of Black Paducahans to the world. Betty has been a driving force behind the preservation of the hotel's legacy.

To learn more, search YouTube for "Ms. Maggie's Memories." If you're interested in supporting the Hotel Metropolitan, please contact the Community Foundation of West Kentucky for more information.

Speaker: Betty Dobson – Executive Director, The Hotel Metropolitan



Lincoln Station Project

The Lincoln Station Foundation is a community-led organization dedicated to redeveloping the former site of Lincoln High School, which served as a vital center for Black education until desegregation in 1954. The school holds a rich history of breaking down barriers to success and meeting various community needs. Although the school was demolished in 1999, the Lincoln Station Project aims to breathe new life into the empty lot by reviving the values and legacy of its past. The vision is to construct a new gathering place for all community members – a community center. Paducah native and former NFL player George Wilson serves as the executive director of the Lincoln Station Foundation. He credits his opportunity to pursue his

NFL dreams to the excellence and resilience fostered at Lincoln High School and is committed to seeing this project come to fruition.

For more information or to support the Lincoln Station Foundation, please contact the Community Foundation of West Kentucky.

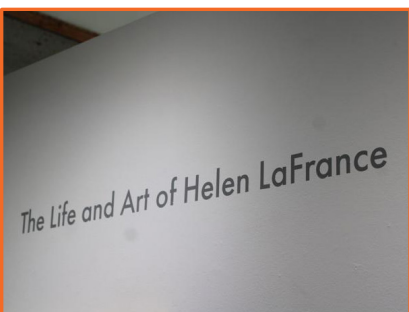
Speaker: George Wilson – Executive Director, Lincoln Station Foundation



Paducah Symphony Orchestra

Last year, the Paducah Symphony Orchestra opened its new Music Academy & Symphony Hall in a renovated space that once served the city as Walter Jettson Jr. High School. The building had served as the orchestra's performance space from shortly after its 1979 founding until 1990 before falling into disrepair. The revitalized space includes eight teaching studios for individual lessons, one teaching room for group rehearsals, and a performance hall that seats about 700.

Speaker: Reece King – Chief Executive Officer, Paducah Symphony Orchestra



The Art & Life of Helen LaFrance

In 2024, the Paducah Historic Preservation Group, a nonprofit dedicated to preserving the region's Black history, came together to purchase multiple works by Helen LaFrance, a self-taught folk artist from Mayfield, Kentucky, known for her memory paintings. These artworks depict Black rural life and local landmarks, telling the stories of the people, including where they worked, worshipped, and lived. Often referred to as the "Grandma Moses of African American Art," LaFrance's creations capture the essence of community and culture. Rhonda McCorry-Smith, the executive director of the Paducah Historic Preservation Group, led the effort to acquire this collection, ensuring the artwork remained in Kentucky, where it belongs.

The collection is now housed at the Paducah School of Art and Design.

For more information or to support the Paducah Historic Preservation Group, please contact the Community Foundation of West Kentucky.

Speaker: Rhonda McCorry-Smith – Executive Director, Paducah Historic Preservation Group



National Quilt Museum

The National Quilt Museum (NQM) opened in Paducah in 1991. The museum was the vision of Bill and Meredith Schroeder, influential Paducah publishers and founders of the American Quilters Society. NQM quickly attracted a national and international audience and became a powerful economic and cultural development engine for the Western Kentucky region. The museum received its national designation from the United States Congress in 2008.

NQM has become America's premier museum for contemporary quilting. Through its first 30 years, NQM has attracted nearly 1 million visitors, curated more than 250 exhibitions, and served 90,000 students. The museum has also exhibited the work of thousands of today's most talented quilters.

Speaker: Bonnie Schrock – Executive Director, National Quilt Museum

Speakers



Emily Black | Founder, Atomic City Voice Studio, and Co-Founder, The Paducah Singers



Betty Dobson | Executive Director, The Hotel Metropolitan



Fowler Black | Director of Operations, Paducah Convention & Visitors Bureau



Ryan Drane | Founding Principal, Blue Sky Global



Nicole Bronzan | Vice President, Communications and Content, Council on Foundations



Reece King | Chief Executive Officer, Paducah Symphony Orchestra



Ben Chandler | Trustee, James Graham Brown Foundation, Owner of *The Woodford Sun*, and Senior Advisor, Press Forward Blue Grass



Sue Marticek | Founder and Executive Director, Compass 82



Ann Searight Christiano | Founder & Director, Center for Public Interest Communications



Rhonda McCorry-Smith | Executive Director, Paducah Historic Preservation Group



Danielle Clore | Founder & CEO, Kentucky Nonprofit Network



Dr. Melissa Newman | Strategy Advisor, Press Forward Blue Grass



Kevin Corcoran | Strategy Director, Lumina Foundation



Bonnie Schrock | Executive Director, National Quilt Museum



Cari Cullen | Program Officer, Domestic Funds, Center for Disaster Philanthropy



Christina Shih | Associate Director, Press Forward



Chris Dockins, Ph.D. | Chief Operating Officer, Community Foundation of West Kentucky



George Wilson | Executive Director, Lincoln Station Foundation

Special Thanks to This Year's Sponsors



THE GHEENS FOUNDATION



Notes & Networking

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