

Friends for Life



Jeff Ellington was a generous man who befriended everyone he met. So when Jeff died in 2020 after a lengthy battle with kidney cancer, a group of his friends decided to memorialize him by establishing the Jeff Ellington Legacy Fund through the Richland

County Foundation. The purpose of the donor-advised fund is to continue Jeff's legacy of charitable giving.

"We were good buddies our entire lives," said Joel Staich, a founding member of the fund. "A core group of his close friends felt strongly about using Jeff's name to create a way to perpetually bless the organizations he cared about."

Jeff attended Mansfield Christian School and the Ohio State University. After returning to Mansfield, he co-founded Allegro Mortgage with Staich, finishing his career as a much sought after mortgage professional.

"Jeff was well-known as an honorable and giving person," Staich said. "He went out of his way to put others' needs before his own, including donating to numerous charities."

One of Jeff's favorite charities was Hope for Hill Tribes, which is based in Columbus. Its mission is to help ethnic minorities in Thailand by providing academic, medical and financial assistance. Others include St. Jude's Hospital for Children, the American

Heart Association, Compassion International, Flying Horse Farm and Wounded Warriors. Jeff was also known for giving to individuals who were in need.

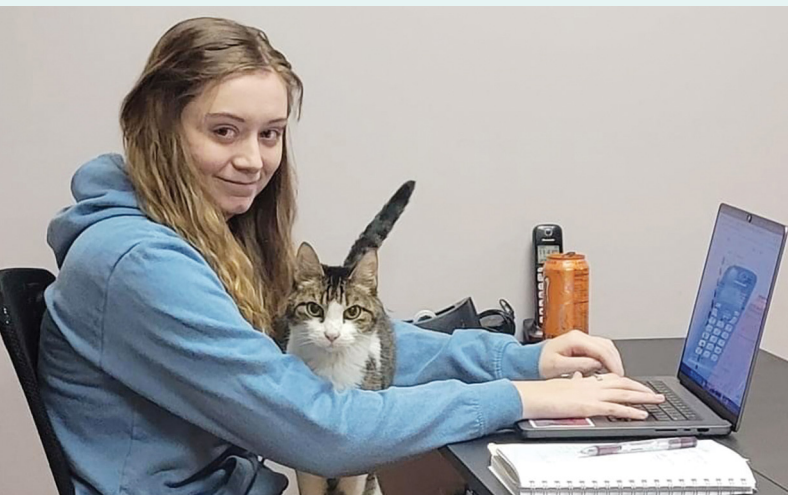
In addition to being a good friend, Jeff was also a loving husband and father. His wife Anne and their daughters Katie and Andrea will also serve on the fund committee.

"It's incredibly meaningful to see my dad's heart for others inspire his friends to keep that spirit of generosity going," Katie said. "I'm so proud and grateful he will be remembered in this way."

Another of Jeff's friends, Jay Byrd, is planning a golf outing at Deer Ridge to benefit the fund. Byrd hopes to make it an annual event. Details will be announced soon.

Anyone can make a tax-deductible donation to the fund at richlandcountyfoundation.org by clicking the donate button and selecting the Jeff Ellington Legacy Fund or writing a check payable to the Richland County Foundation with the fund noted on the memo line.

The Humane Society of Richland County has a new intern, Hailey Corcoran, a student at NC State College. She is helping the Humane Society with website updates, social media content, as well as creating marketing material for upcoming events. *The Fran and Warren Rupp Fund at the Foundation supports interns at local nonprofit organizations. Fifteen interns were hired this semester.*



Girl Talk is an after-school program for students at Mansfield Senior and Middle School. The mentorship program provides young women with leadership and life skills. Damara Carter and Ashton Trueblood lead the group along with volunteers. *The Women's Fund, Crossroads City Center, and Mansfield Senior High School are funders.*





Richland County Foundation Annual Meeting

The Richland County Foundation will conduct its annual meeting Wednesday, May 18, at 11:30 a.m. at Kingwood Center Gardens, Mansfield. During the meeting Chairwoman Jessica Gribben and President Brady Groves will review the Foundation's work during 2021.



Chairwoman Jessica Gribben and President Brady Groves

Local Graduate Now a Successful Walmart Executive



because my test scores were great, and I was in all the honors classes. Unfortunately, no one guided me on the path to college.

My parents were amazing at pushing me and supporting me with the vision they had for my life. But they did not know what they did not know. Things changed after that day, and with the help of many, we took immediate course corrections to realign my path.

The next biggest challenge was the college application fees. I did not come from money, and this was not easy on my family. I remember my dad working all the overtime he could get so we could pay for the fees and go on college visits. My dad was an amazing man. I am where I am today because of him and my mom.

I want to call out a memory that is burned into my soul. I was in maybe the 7th or 8th grade. It was midnight, and my dad awoke me from bed and took me downstairs. He had just got home after working a double shift. He was covered in dirt and grime from the steel mill in Mansfield where he worked. He sat me down at the kitchen table and said son look at me. He laid out it hands, covered in calluses, and said this is not the life I want for you. The steel mill has provided a roof over our heads, clothes on our backs, and food for every meal. But I want more for you and your family. I want you to go to college. I said dad, I know we have talked about me going to college many times. He said this is not a moment where we are just talking, when I am working in that mill on OT shifts, I am doing it so we can help send you to college. He said, I know if you get a degree, your life will open up to things bigger and better than we can ever imagine. He said I followed my dad and, your mom's dad into that steel mill because I did not know what else to do. It has been a great job, but it is not what I want for your life. He made me promise

I would go to college and be the first in the family to earn a degree.

Q: Did someone at Mansfield Senior High School help you overcome barriers?

A: Once I knew what to ask, and where I needed help, absolutely! Dick and Ann Kay were amazing supporters. Dick was the first in his family to go to college and he was my physics teacher. Ann was my English teacher and the school newspaper advisor. Scott Jones was my golf coach and Richard Baker was my Latin teacher and Academic Challenge Coach.

Also, my Boy Scout Troop in Mansfield, Troop 104 (now defunct) was there to help and guide me. I was an Eagle Scout with their support. Some of the leaders were Mr. McGinty, Mr. Etzwiler, and Mr. Wappner. Local entrepreneur Jim Oberlin, owner of Oberlin Properties in Mansfield, was an amazing support person. He was a youth leader at my church.

Q: What would you say to encourage potential first-generation college students to pursue a degree?

A: You are not alone! The thing is, I felt alone, but I really was not alone. I just had to learn who to ask. The guidance counselors, teachers, and even other students were clearly better prepared for the steps ahead.

You cannot be afraid to ask for support. It is hard to do everything on your own, so speak up. Put it out on social media what you aspire to be, and what you seek to do, and let the universe help connect you with other individuals who want to help!

Another easy thing you can do is simply research colleges and the steps to prepare. I wish I would have had this when I was in high school. The internet was in its infancy, and we did not have it at home until I was in college.

Billy Link Jr. graduated from Mansfield Senior High School in 1997 and is now Senior Director of Operations for Walmart's East Business Unit. As a first-generation college student, he received scholarships to attend Ohio State University and graduated with two degrees, BS in Biology, and a BA in Psychology.

Q: What were the obstacles you had to overcome as a first-generation college student?

A: Overcoming the unknown was the biggest thing for me. For example, in a random chat with one of my high school guidance counselors after taking the ACT she asked me how many colleges had I applied to?

At that moment I had applied to exactly zero. She told me I was so far behind, and I should have already applied to my top 10 schools and narrowed my choices based on which schools offered the most financial aid.

I had no perspective in this space. None of my family had ever been to college. I explained this to the counselor. She said someone guided me in the right direction,

Recent Grants Help Meet Emerging Needs

The Richland County Foundation Board of Trustees approved many grants during its February and April board meetings. For an entire list go to richlandcountyfoundation.org.

Among the competitive, field of interest and donor-advised fund grants approved by the board in February:

Akron Children's Hospital Mansfield Location – Behavioral Health Center

The hospital will construct a building north of its current one on S. Trimble Road. It will house a Behavioral Health Center and will employ 20 staff by 2025. Richland County ranks highest in the Greater Akron Region for the number of children who have experienced two or more adverse childhood experiences in their lifetime.

City of Ontario – Inclusive Playground and Spray Park

Ontario is taking steps at Marshall Park to provide an inclusive playground and spray park for families. It will be constructed in 2022 to provide opportunities for able-bodied children to play alongside differently abled children in a unique environment accessible to everyone.

OhioHealth Foundation – Mobile Mammography Unit

OhioHealth will purchase a new mobile mammography unit to provide mammograms in our area. Only 50% of eligible women receive a mammogram annually. The unit will bring care to women and remove a key barrier of accessibility.

Ronald McDonald House of Central Ohio - Helping Hands Program

Families with a seriously ill child hospitalized at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus can stay at the Ronald McDonald House while their child receives treatment. In 2021, RMHC provided service to 67 Richland County families for a total of 521 nights. The grant will provide 250 nights of rest for Richland County families this year.

Grants approved by the Board of Trustees in April included an award from the Community Fund to **Downtown Mansfield, Inc. (DMI) for a pilot program to address the needs of the homeless community** and the ongoing development of downtown. Richland County Mental Health and Recovery

Services Board, Richland County Job and Family Services, Richland County Commissioners, and DMI have partnered with the Mansfield Police Department to develop the program. A Homeless Response Team consisting of a behavioral health professional and a law enforcement officer will work together. The behavioral health professional will provide mental health and substance use disorder assessments and connect individuals with resources. The law enforcement officer will provide security and support. The program will begin May 1 and continue through June 30, 2023. Data will be collected and evaluated with a report for potential changes to the program by September 1.

A grant was awarded from the Board Discretionary Fund to the **City of Mansfield – Community Development Department to create an incentive for downtown property owners** to renovate the upper floors in buildings to create additional apartments. The grant supports a project outlined in the Mansfield Rising Plan.

It is always good to see Ralph Tomassi of Hospice of North Central Ohio. He stopped by with an estate gift for the Hospice endowed fund. If you would like to learn more about how an endowed fund can help your nonprofit, contact us.

The newly installed de-escalation simulator allows Mansfield police officers to practice de-escalation techniques with real-time feedback. The MPD also will use the equipment to build a bridge to the community by offering opportunities to participate in the simulator. *The grants to fund the simulator came from the following RCF funds: Community Fund, the Gorman Fund, Mansfield Police Department Fund, and Fred B. and Marian J. Hout Fund.*



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Ritter's Run Construction



Mansfield Splash Pad John's Park

Springtime is Construction Time

Ritter's Run Apartments

The Ohio District 5 Area Agency on Aging broke ground for a new apartment complex on Ohio Street in Mansfield. Partners in the project include the Foundation, Richland County Land Bank, City of Mansfield, Mechanics Bank and PROXIA Partners. The Ritter's Run project is a ranch-style apartment complex designed to serve low-income adults ages 55 and older.

West End Neighborhood Streetscape

The first phase of the project, with an estimated construction cost of \$1 million, will improve Glessner Avenue between Wood Street and Sturges and Arthur avenues. It includes upgraded sidewalks, improved crosswalks, new street lighting, retaining walls, and tree lawns. The Foundation awarded grants through the Gorman Fund and the Jones Porter Nauman Fund.

Mansfield Splash Pads

A grant was awarded to install splash pads at John's Park and North Lake Park. The City of Mansfield Parks and Recreation Department said children will be able to enjoy them this summer. The project is funded by three funds at the Foundation; the Community Fund, the Robert and Esther Black Family Foundation and the Fran and Warren Rupp Fund.