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We all benefit from group's foresight

Ray Caraway serves as the president of the Community Foundation of Northern Colorado. Bruce Hach

In the fall of 1975, Fort Collins was a very different place - a small college town of approximately 60,000 people on the verge of major growth. Mayor Karl Carson and city leaders were making plans to turn the Lincoln Junior High School building into what we know today as the Lincoln Center, and a group of visionary citizens were actively planning for the future through an initiative called Designing Tomorrow Today.

Carson contacted Buford Plemmons, a Poudre School District administrator and community leader, to suggest the creation of a community foundation. There was a need for a nonprofit organization to collect charitable contributions made in support of the new Lincoln Center. In addition, Olive Ludlow had left a \$25,000 bequest for a purpose that was somewhat unclear, and a community foundation would be an appropriate vehicle to receive this gift as well.

With this telephone call from Carson to Plemmons, the Community Foundation of Northern Colorado was born. Initially, the foundation was called the Fort Collins Community Foundation, but it later expanded to serve the entire Northern Colorado region.

Thirty-five years later, many of the founding trustees of the Community Foundation of Northern Colorado have passed away. Some have quietly retired from active community involvement, but some are still as visible and active in community affairs as ever.

Their efforts illustrate that our generation, like all others, benefits from the hard work, dreams and investments of people we may never know and initiatives that have long been forgotten.

Today, the Community Foundation grants millions of dollars each year and has grown to \$45 million in assets - investments that give back to our community year after year.

The Community Foundation manages 30 scholarship funds, which this year alone touched the lives of more than 50 students who are attending dozens of different colleges and universities throughout the United States.

A new generation of community leaders and donors has used the Community Foundation as a platform to launch and fund new initiatives such as UniverCity Connections, Homeward 2020, FortZED and the visionary Rialto Bridge Project, which is designed to be a catalyst for revitalization in downtown Loveland.

The \$25,000 bequest left by Ludlow has paved the way for gifts like the recent multimillion dollar bequests from Doyle and Luvesta Jones of Berthoud. Memorial funds, large and small, have been established to carry on the memory of loved ones.

The Community Foundation has served as the infrastructure for building projects such as Inspiration Playground and as the platform for launching new nonprofits such as Project Smile and CHAMP. And all these years later, the Lincoln Center is undergoing a major renovation and expansion with the help of a distribution of almost \$500,000 from the Community Foundation.

Most of what the Community Foundation does is very quiet and behind the scenes. The majority of people in our region may never even know it exists, but everyone in our community has been touched by its work and by the generosity of its many donors.

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Reflecting on what those founding trustees and donors initiated 35 years ago and the impact their efforts have had should inspire all of us during this season of giving. The only things that truly last are indeed the ones we give away.
