Karen Shellie

Director of Philanthropy

Ann Arbor Area
Community Foundation
For good. For ever. For all.

Karen Shellie is a philanthropic leader, community connector, and relationship builder with more than three decades of experience spanning marketing, communications, nonprofit leadership, and fund development.

Karen joined the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation (AAACF) in 2022 as a Philanthropic Advisor, working alongside individuals, families, professional advisors, and community partners to connect charitable goals with meaningful opportunities for impact. As Director of Philanthropy, she leads efforts to deepen relationships with donors and fundholders and helps individuals and families develop thoughtful giving strategies that reflect their values while responding to the evolving needs and opportunities across Washtenaw County.

Karen believes philanthropy is most powerful when people, purpose, and opportunity come together. She values learning about the experiences, priorities, and aspirations of people throughout the community and helping connect generosity with organizations and initiatives working to create lasting impact.



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During her time at AAACF, Karen has helped advance new approaches to charitable giving, including the launch of the Non-Endowed Fund and Third-Party Advisor programs. She is also a 21/64 Certified Advisor, bringing a multigenerational perspective to conversations about family philanthropy, shared values, and charitable legacy.

Before joining AAACF, Karen spent more than 18 years in corporate marketing and communications leadership followed by more than a decade in the nonprofit sector. Her experience includes leadership and development roles with Habitat for Humanity of Huron Valley, Washtenaw Literacy, Madonna University, and EHM Foundation, as well as service on local nonprofit boards.

Karen is especially passionate about philanthropy that expands opportunity and strengthens communities. Her interests include education, affordable housing, adult literacy, first-generation college students, and programs supporting older adults and caregivers. She believes creating opportunity for one person can generate a ripple effect across families and generations.

Karen made Ypsilanti Township home in 2020, where she lives with her husband David, and their three fun-loving Basenjis (African barkless dog) and enjoys being part of the community she serves. Her commitment to community also extends beyond her work at AAACF. She volunteers with Therapeutic Riding, Inc., where she embraces her unofficial role as part of the “Equine Glam Squad,” grooming and caring for horses that support therapeutic programming. She also volunteers with Ypsilanti Meals on Wheels, including delivering holiday meals to community members.

At the heart of Karen’s work is a simple belief: philanthropy is not only about giving - it is about creating possibility. She is honored to help people turn their generosity into meaningful, lasting impact for Washtenaw County.