

March 12, 2021

Hello Members of the Cottagewood Community Foundation:

Reflecting upon the past year, we are truly thankful for the front-line workers who kept us safe, our families and friends that kept each other strong, and the generosity of the community during an unprecedented season. The strength of our wonderful Cottagewood community carried us through 2020 and now we are approaching the 2021 Season with optimism and excitement.

Our Mission at the Cottagewood Store is to bring people together as a community, to celebrate one another, provide a place of gathering, and make long lasting memories. Even with the restrictions in place last year, we were able to get creative and accomplish each and every one of those goals.

**Opening Day for the Store is planned for Saturday, May 1,** and I can assure you that Laurie and the Board have been hard at work behind the scenes planning for another wonderful season.

The impact of the pandemic is far reaching on small businesses nationwide. We, like many other local businesses, rely on the support of our community to stay afloat and in the case of our seasonal business, community support is essential to being able to open our doors each season. The Store is the heart of our community and it is only through YOUR financial and volunteer support that we are able to open and run it successfully season after season.

Expenses to maintain this 125-year-old building are real. In 2020 we not only had to ensure safety to our employees and customers by purchasing large amounts of PPE, but made numerous repairs to the building including 2 new water heaters, improvements to the water softener, repairs to plumbing lines, removal of a large oak tree and the replacement of the above apartment dishwasher. In addition to all of the above, our hardwood floors are being refinished prior to opening our doors this season.

**Last year, your donations, and support produced incredible results during Covid-19:**

169 gracious people contributed to the Cottagewood Community Foundation Fund in 2020 including 7 new families who joined as members. Through your generosity we raised \$36,850 which allowed the store to operate in limited capacity due to the Minnesota restrictions placed on retail.

We are thankful to the corporate sponsorships from Tradition Capital Bank and continued appreciation from Streeter & Associates, Grieger Group and Vine Hill Partners over the many years they've supported operations of the store.

We raised over \$4,000 from your donations to the Spring and Fall Cottagewood Yard Sales. Thank you, Tom Erdmann, for continuing to lead this bi-annual event.

Despite the restrictions and impact of Covid-19, the Cottagewood Store operated without any issues and continued to provide a safe place to enjoy sense of community.

**Here are some highlights of how the store adapted to these unprecedented times:**

We provided a safe working environment to approximately 20 kids who put you first, making sure the store was clean, the environment safe and social distance practices in place. We removed the tables inside to provide more space which made our space more welcoming to customers, resulting in better traffic flow and increased sales with easier access to merchandise. By having a limited deli menu, we significantly reduced waste and lowered our costs!

We had the most successful change in recent history by moving Grill Nights to Food Truck Fridays. The response and 'buzz' about this change was outstanding and will continue into 2021.

Our Santa Event sold out immediately with members getting priority status on reservations.

Despite the cancellation of our beloved 4<sup>th</sup> of July event, fundraising through a virtual raffle was highly successful and allowed us to gain some valuable learnings we will apply in the future.

While the reality of Covid still remains in the world, we are ready for a new and exciting season as we continue to live up to our mission. Similar to prior years, we ask for your support and contributions. What you each give to the Cottagewood Community Fund, you get back as a community in the value the store brings to our neighborhood.

**This year, expect to see some awesome things.**

Even more Food Truck Fridays with more food options including Parlour, Arcane, Marty's Deli, Brick Oven Bus and more.

New weekday Bingo Nights

Fabulous Cottagewood merchandise

The return of Cottagestock and the CTWD Dog Show

Your tax-deductible donation allows us to open our doors on May 1<sup>st</sup> and execute a season filled with wonderful events, great merchandise, and treats within a short walk. ANY amount goes a long way towards keeping our little store afloat. **Here are just a few examples of where your money goes.**

- One donation of \$250 allows us to fill our pop cooler with cold drinks
- One donation of \$500 gives us the resources to help pay our monthly insurance bill
- One donation of \$1,000 enables us to pay 2 ½ months of Excel Energy and Centerpoint Gas Bills

[Please donate today.](#) We now accept check, credit card (4% fee) and venmo to @ctwdlaurie.

The success of our historic gem hugely relies on community members volunteering their time and talents. "Many hands make light work" and we truly need your help to plan, host and support the events you love. Relying on those who have already volunteered their time over the past many years can become burdensome. Have a fresh idea to contribute to the store or community? Eager to help with planning an existing event? Please let us know! The more we can engage with the wonderful community members we're so lucky to live amongst, the more we can ensure we're meeting the desires of our community and setting the store up to thrive for many more years to come.

Thanks for all you do!

Rob Burke & the Cottagewood Community Foundation Board of Directors