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Message from the CEO

Creating Connections

OUR SPRING ISSUE of *Thrive* celebrates the power of connection. Our work is, at its core, relationship centred. The people and organizations we work with — donors, grantees and community partners — make Edmonton a stronger, more vibrant place for all and help us achieve our purpose of enriching communities now and for generations.

I am constantly amazed and inspired by how generous Edmontonians are. In 2024, thanks to the contributions of our donors, we granted approximately \$35.5 million to nearly 900 charities and 550 students, bringing Edmonton Community Foundation's lifetime funding to over \$430 million.

As Black History Month draws to a close, we're proud of our collaborations with the Africa Centre, City of Edmonton and Edmonton Heritage Council. Together, we provided funding for a variety of important programs and events celebrating Edmonton's African diaspora community. It's an honour to celebrate how they profoundly and positively influence the culture and vibrancy of where we live. We've also fulfilled our commitment to match donations to endowments supporting Black-led and Black-serving organizations, securing \$200,000 for the Edmonton Black Community Fund and the Africa Centre Fund. Created by the community for the community, these funds ensure lasting support for future generations.

Our capital grants program provides crucial support for infrastructure and long-term sustainability for organizations. In 2024, we provided more than \$1 million for capital projects. This includes:

- \$80,000 to the Fort Saskatchewan Food Gatherers Society for the purchase of a commercial refrigerated truck, expanding its capacity to distribute perishable food items to those in need
- \$50,000 to the Zebra Child & Youth Advocacy Centre Society to furnish a new child forensic interview suite, ensuring proper care for children affected by sexual abuse
- \$50,000 to the River Valley Alliance for interpretive signs and wayfinding symbols along the newly named Amisk Wacîw Mêskanaw Trail, enhancing accessibility to our shared natural spaces



Image supplied

With International Women's Day on March 8, we remember three remarkable women we lost this past year — Dianne Kipnes, Grace Rumbold and Elexis Schloss. Their legacies of advocacy, participation and generosity live on through the many organizations they touched like NAIT, the Lois Hole Hospital for Women, Edmonton Opera, Compassion House, Pilgrims Hospice and the Citadel Theatre. Each was a dedicated volunteer and philanthropist shaping our city, and an example to which we can all aspire.

As we move forward into 2025, we do so with deep gratitude for the relationships that make our work possible. Thank you for being part of this journey with us.

Tina Thomas

CEO, Edmonton Community Foundation



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A Beacon for the Arts Community

Remembering Dianne Kipnes

Philanthropy is driven by deep connections to meaningful causes, and Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) shares many. Dr. Dianne Kipnes, who passed away in December, leaves a remarkable legacy alongside her husband Irv. As one of Edmonton's most influential philanthropists, she helped transform the city through endowments at ECF, supporting Edmonton Opera, the Edmonton Jewish Charitable Community Foundation, Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts and Ballet Edmonton.



Dianne Kipnes

DIANNE'S LEGACY IS one of leadership, passion and humanity. She led the way for others to become part of Edmonton's philanthropic community through ECF.

I admired Dianne. She shared wisdom and encouragement that had a significant impact on me. I first met her back in 2004. A few years later, she and I chatted about how Lynn Mandel had roped me into helping a small, Edmonton-based ballet company, Citie Ballet, now Ballet Edmonton.

The Dianne and Irving Kipnes Foundation's philanthropy is the reason Ballet Edmonton exists. In 2012, with the support of several people, the little pre-professional company became a fully professional, resident ballet company for Edmonton. Irv and Dianne hosted a fundraiser where I told a crowd of their friends about the vision for our city to have its own ballet company.

Fast forward to 2017 and the company was growing, becoming known as a company to watch. But cash was not keeping up. One February morning, I gathered up the courage to email Dianne to ask if she and Irv could help. She phoned me immediately. Within days she made arrangements for a cash gift which she described as an advance on what they planned to give over the next few years. It saved the company.

In March 2023, Ballet Edmonton was presented to the nation at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. As I walked to the theatre for the performance that evening, I looked up at the Kipnes Lantern. There on the screen was a message welcoming Ballet Edmonton to the stage. All of this, because Dianne believed in the arts. And she believed in people.

Her passing is such a big loss for her family and for our city. But Dianne's positive, generous impact on so many people will live on. Of that, I am sure. *ecf*

Trudy Callaghan

Chair, Board of Directors, Ballet Edmonton

Trudy Callaghan is the chair of the board of directors of Ballet Edmonton. Established in 1998 as Citie Ballet, the company was able to become a fully professional, contemporary ballet company in 2012 with a social impact investment from ECF through its Social Enterprise Fund. Over the years, the dance company has also been the recipient of several ECF project grants. Further, with the assistance of ECF staff, Callaghan worked with Ballet Edmonton staff and other board members when local donor and supporter Charles MacKay came forward to help establish an ECF endowment fund for Ballet Edmonton.

Have you seen an act of generosity in the ECF philanthropy community you'd like to share?
Contact us at info@ecf.ca and we can help share your story of charitable giving.



A better future for Alberta's animals

The Alberta SPCA outlines a four-year strategic plan, thanks to ECF support

By LISA CATTERALL

OVER THE PAST 65 YEARS, the Alberta Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Alberta SPCA) has improved the lives of countless animals across the province, from dogs and cats to horses and cattle. But, like many animal welfare organizations, the society has been facing increased demand in recent years, making it even harder to ensure animals across the province have safe, healthy homes.

"The animal welfare community is stressed, probably more than it ever has been. Everyone is feeling the pressure," explains Leanne Niblock, Executive Director of the Alberta SPCA.

"There are so many things contributing to the stress on the system, but I think the rising cost of living is impacting

a lot of folks. If you have to make a decision whether to pay your rent or buy food for your animals, that's a really hard place to be."

While the Alberta SPCA doesn't operate a brick-and-mortar shelter, it does remove animals from distress across the province, and works with partner shelters to find loving homes for those animals. It also enforces animal protection legislation and runs community outreach education programs to support animal owners.

"Our partners in the community are very important to us," says Niblock. "We all work together. Whether they're taking care of animals or livestock for us or if they're helping us move companion animals into loving homes, we're all part of a big, complex system." >

To better understand that complex system, and how the Alberta SPCA could best support the animal welfare community going forward, Niblock wanted the organization to take a step back from its day-to-day work, to consider bigger questions about its future.

“The team here really wanted to look at how we might address the root causes of the problems that the animal welfare community is seeing in the province,” she explains.

In 2024, thanks to support from Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF), the team at the Alberta SPCA was able to do exactly that. It completed a strategic planning process, gathering insight and feedback from others in the animal welfare community to identify priorities and how the organization could adapt its offerings to respond to growing needs. At the end of the process, it produced a four-year strategic plan to guide the organization going forward.

“Collecting input and conducting research to guide an organization’s mission is crucial,” says Melisa Zapisocky, ECF’s Grants Associate. “It can also be expensive to do properly. Many charities face a tough choice — investing time and money into developing a strategic plan or using those resources to deliver their services.”

This was the quandary the Alberta SPCA found itself in.

“Often, non-profits can’t do this kind of work, because we’re spending so much money on the care of animals,” says Niblock. “Which is what we should be doing, of course, but to be able to ask the bigger questions is so valuable.”

Through this process, the Alberta SPCA team also gained insight into the factors that might lead a person to neglect animals. Because of the interconnected nature of individual, animal and community well-being, the SPCA would have to support both human and animal

“Traditionally, animal welfare focuses so much on the animal that the human element of that was forgotten a little bit.”

— Leanne Niblock



health in order to make meaningful change.

“Traditionally, animal welfare focuses so much on the animal that the human element of that was forgotten a little bit,” says Niblock. “We need to think about the person’s mental health and how that’s impacting their ability to care for the animals. And while the Alberta SPCA isn’t the organization that will directly help those humans necessarily, we can help to make those connections to other organizations.”

Thanks to the strategic planning process, the Alberta SPCA was also able to refine its organizational purpose, focusing on an approach that addresses the root causes of animal welfare concerns by recognizing the interconnectedness of people, animals and the environment. Ultimately, Niblock credits the process as a game-changer for the organization.

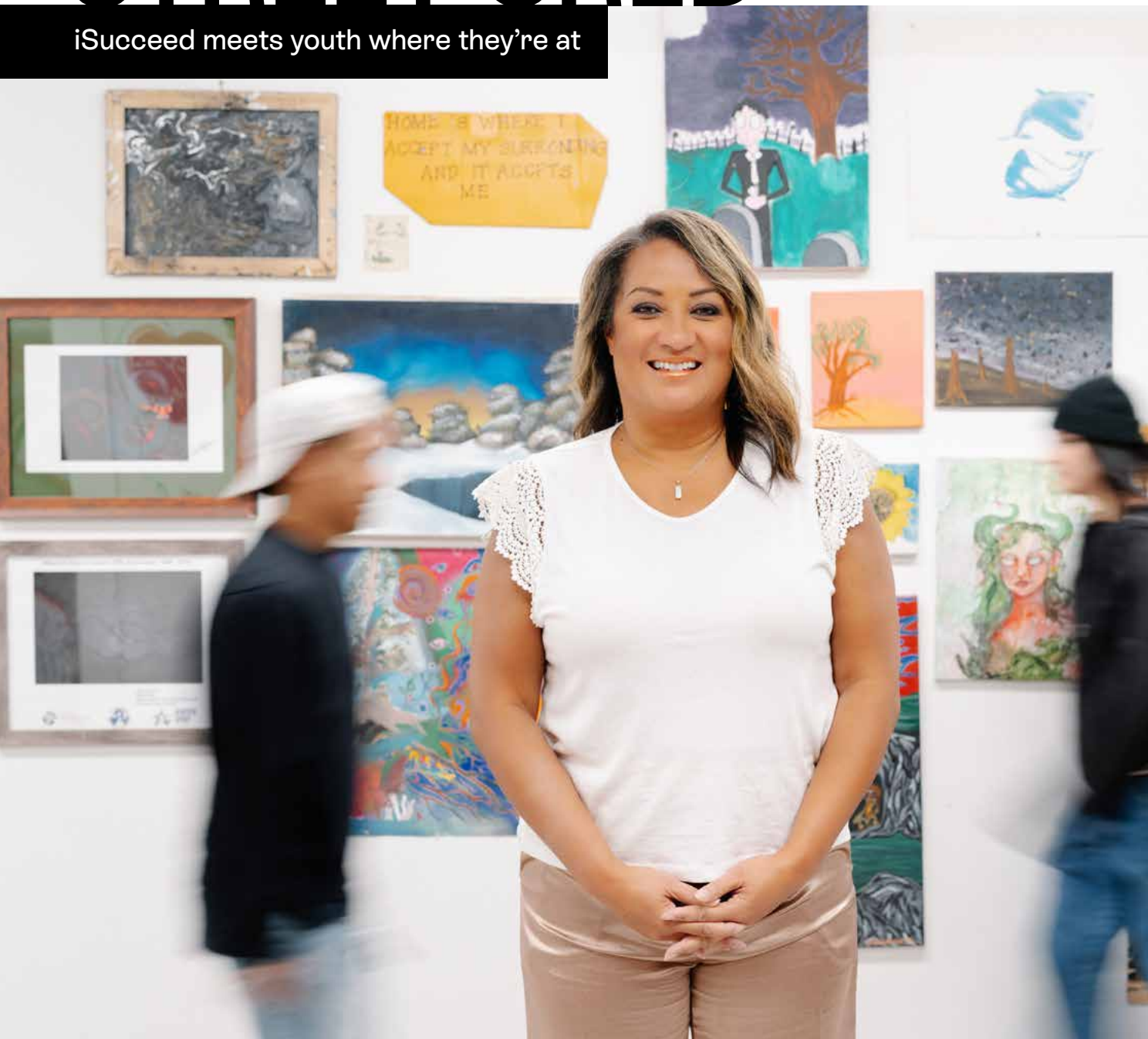
“What it means is that we’re thinking about the future, not just the day-to-day putting a Band-Aid on things. It means that we’re trying to tackle big challenges so that we don’t have as many animals that need our help,” she says.

“This really is lighting the path for us forward as we work through this very complex system and challenges.” *ecf*



STREET CRED

iSucceed meets youth where they're at



By **CAITLIN HART**

Photos **MAT SIMPSON**

“People have to know that there’s some really tough situations our youth are navigating. iHuman is here to support them.”

— Beryl Bacchus



Beryl Bacchus, Executive Director of iHuman Youth Society

BERYL BACCHUS HAD a problem. iHuman’s drop-in space, HYPE, which once served 80 youths every week, was now meeting the needs of 500. As the executive director of iHuman Youth Society, Bacchus needed to find room.

So, HYPE relocated to a larger area of iHuman’s building and rebranded to go with their new digs: iSucceed.

iSucceed supports marginalized youth, ages 12 to 24, by meeting their immediate needs through comprehensive, wrap-around services such as mental-health support, access to healthcare, housing referrals, and more. iSucceed is also the gateway to iHuman’s arts programs which provide an outlet for self expression, personal healing and growth.

One of those youths is Diamond, an artist and aspiring public speaker who first came to iHuman a few years ago.

That first day at iHuman, she admits, she was “mad at the world.”

“My mom forced me to be here. But it’s how I met my favourite worker, Delilah,” Diamond says. The people she met at

iHuman welcomed her. Now, she says, they’re a second family.

iSucceed is the first point of contact for youths coming to iHuman. The low-barrier space means youths can get connected to services — whether it’s working with a navigator to figure out their next steps in iHuman’s programs or just doing their laundry.

“If a youth is ready for it, our team works with them individually to ensure we’re giving them quality tailored programming and we’re meeting them where they’re at and helping them reach their goals,” Bacchus says.

Through art therapy and studio spaces, youths develop skills to empower and express themselves. Art programs are a big draw for youths who come through iHuman’s doors. Not many services for at-risk youths include access to a theatre and indoor spraypaint booths.

With an \$80,000 Community Grant from Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF), iHuman is able to ▶



Allie Saurette, iSucceed Team Lead



continue offering services and paying their staff navigators, the first people youths encounter when coming to iSucceed.

“We recognize that the effectiveness of a charity’s programs is directly tied to its staffing capacity,” Dave Chowne, ECF’s Grants Associate says. “By investing in the people who deliver services, we help ensure that organizations like iHuman can create meaningful, lasting impact.”

For iHuman, expanding its capacity was crucial to keeping pace with the unexpected growth of the iSucceed program.

“With the support of the money that Edmonton Community Foundation gave us, we were able to handle that growth that happened that we weren’t necessarily expecting,” Bacchus says.

Navigators build relationships with youths, understanding their individual needs. There is no one-size-fits-all solution — iSucceed takes a holistic approach to the barriers and challenges youths face.

“Delilah played the biggest role in my life. She opened doors for me,” Diamond says. “She has to be my biggest inspiration. She made me want to volunteer.”

One place Diamond volunteers at is iHuman’s Woven Journey, a support group where young moms can connect, cook together and access resources like the baby supply bank and gain parenting skills.

“I love seeing the joy on their faces when they get that support,” she says.

Fostering community and resilience is at the heart of every iHuman program — building relationships over shared meals, helping youths develop their own sense of power through the arts, and providing a safe place to go sets the groundwork for youths to thrive.

“We kind of laugh and say we’d like to think we have a little bit of street cred with the youth,” says Bacchus.

They’ve built that street cred over almost 30 years of serving the youth in Edmonton’s core. Founded in 1997, art has always been central to iHuman’s offerings. It’s not just for fun — it’s a key component of the services iHuman provides. A shower and a meal is a starting point. And then art plays a transformative role in their healing.

“That evolution from when they first come to see us and they’re in LiNKS [Mental Health Clinic] and doing art therapy to actually utilizing our art studios is really spectacular to see,” says Bacchus. “Some of the talent that comes out of pain unfortunately is pretty amazing to see.”

Diamond echoes those sentiments. “There’s been a drastic change in my life. It changed for the better. My art hangs everywhere,” she says. “These people give me guidance to be better.”

Bacchus says Diamond has come far during her time at iHuman, pursuing her public speaking goals by joining Toastmasters and getting involved with the Edmonton Youth Council.

“There’s some stigma out there that kids who are homeless or experiencing trauma are misbehaved,” says Bacchus. “People have to know that there’s some really tough situations our youth are navigating. iHuman is here to support them.”

Diamond adds, “I wish people understood the youth here. It’s not just for homeless youth. It’s a place where everyone accepts you.”

In a challenging funding climate, with more youths seeking help than ever, sustainable funding for these programs is crucial — donating time, money or items means youths in need can continue to count on iHuman. *ecf*



Tim Kirby, CFA

ASK THE EXPERT

Charitable giving can benefit your business and the causes you care about

By **TIM KIRBY**

AS A BUSINESS owner, finding ways to reduce your tax liability while contributing to causes that matter can be a powerful combination. Charitable giving can play an important role in achieving tax goals, but, as with all things tax related, there are complexities to navigate and pitfalls to avoid. Speaking with a tax advisor is crucial to developing a strategy that maximizes benefits for your business and the community. Here, I'll answer some common questions about how charitable giving can help businesses with their tax strategies.

EDMONTON COMMUNITY FOUNDATION (ECF): What are some examples of business situations that can trigger tax implications?

TIM KIRBY (TK): Selling a business or capital assets, receiving a large bonus, or corporate restructuring all have tax implications. These events often trigger capital gains taxes, income taxes or other tax liabilities. As a business owner, you need to plan in advance how to handle these to ensure your financial obligations don't hinder future growth or personal finances.

ECF: What are the biggest considerations when dealing with these tax scenarios?

TK: You must understand the full scope of potential tax liabilities and how these events impact short-term and long-term finances. You'll also need to evaluate how various tax-planning strategies, including charitable

donations, can mitigate these liabilities. It's important to consider how tax implications align with your overall business and personal goals, such as retirement planning or future investments.

ECF: How can charitable giving help to offset these tax events?

TK: Charitable giving can reduce taxable income through deductions and credits, which in turn can lower the tax burden in specific situations, such as the sale of a business or realizing a significant capital gains on the disposition of capital assets such as stocks, bonds or vacation properties. By donating to registered charities, businesses can reduce their taxable income while supporting causes they care about. Certain types of corporate income tax are refundable, and a donation strategy can benefit the donor by triggering a tax refund while furthering the corporation's philanthropic objectives. A well-structured charitable giving strategy can be a win-win for the business and the community.

ECF: Who would you recommend having these conversations with?

TK: It's essential to consult with a qualified tax advisor and a financial planner who can guide your business through tax strategy decisions. A charitable giving advisor or representative from a charity can help align your philanthropic goals with the best tax strategies. Collaborating with professionals who understand the full spectrum of your personal and business financial and charitable objectives is crucial to maximizing charitable, business and tax benefits.

ECF: Why is it important to receive assistance from someone who can speak about the benefits of selling a business, and the unexpected consequences from the sale?

TK: Selling a business can trigger unforeseen consequences, such as capital gains taxes or changes in business structure that might impact your personal finances. Understanding the after-tax bottom line following a sale is more important than focusing on the top-line sale price. Having a team of professionals to help navigate the benefits and potential drawbacks of the sale ensures that you can make financially sound decisions aligned with your long-term objectives. Tax and donation planning can often bridge valuation gaps on proposed sale transactions. *ecf*

Tim Kirby is a Partner at Felesky Flynn LLP and specializes in estate and succession planning, corporate and personal tax planning, and mergers and acquisitions. He is recognized as a leading tax lawyer by The Best Lawyers in Canada™ and is ranked as a featured Leading Lawyer in Corporate Tax, Finance and M&A, and Estate & Personal Tax Planning – Estate & Tax Planning by Canadian Lexpert®.



ROOTED IN COMMUNITY

Ken and Jacquie Riske sow the seeds of a legacy after retirement

By ECF Staff

AFTER DECADES OF cultivating a vibrant business and community connection through Millcreek Nursery, Ken and Jacquie Riske are transitioning into retirement with the same purpose and care that defined their careers.

The nursery, which first opened in 1987, grew from humble beginnings. Initially, it was just Ken. He was planning to grow an apple orchard but pivoted to retail after his first crop of fruit trees sold out.

In 1993, Ken married Jacquie. By that time, Millcreek Nursery was beginning to flourish, so much so that Jacquie left her job at TD Bank and came onboard as Ken's full-time business partner, helping with every aspect of the company. Together, they grew the nursery into a thriving garden centre and community hub renowned for its high-quality plants and personalized service.

"I always enjoyed helping people make their yards beautiful," Ken reflects. "It's been rewarding to see our trees and shrubs enhance landscapes across Edmonton, from residential gardens to university campuses."

Ken's deep roots in the Mill Creek area extend beyond his business. His family has owned the property where the nursery was located since 1903. Immigrating to Canada from what was then Prussia, they went on to start a dairy farm on the property. Growing up on the farm, Ken's father instilled in him

a strong sense of community responsibility.

"At six years old, my dad taught me to save and give back," Ken recalls. "He paid me 10 cents an hour, and I'd set aside half for savings and 10 per cent for charity. That early lesson stayed with me."

Now, as Ken embraces retirement, he continues to honour his family's legacy with Jacquie through philanthropy. Guided by professional financial planning, the Riskes established two funds with Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) to direct their charitable giving to causes close to their hearts. This includes horticultural education at Olds College and international food relief through the Prairie Gleaners Society, among many others.

The Riske's non-endowed fund enables them to provide immediate support with larger sums to charities when they'd like to. This is different from their endowed fund that disburses four per cent of the market value of the fund annually.

The endowment model ensures that the fund will continue to grow and grant larger amounts in perpetuity. It's a "forever fund."

"Establishing an endowment allows you to forward your hard work into worthy things that maybe you didn't have time to participate in while you were working," Ken explains. "Plus, it's a great way to manage tax implications during retirement."

The Riske's endowment is a win-win situation, demonstrating how charitable giving can be a strategic tool within an effective retirement plan. By directing funds to meaningful causes, they not only leave a lasting impact but also benefit from tax advantages that can reduce the burden of capital gains and income taxes. This approach allows the Riskes to make the most of their retirement finances while supporting the community that has been an integral part of their life together.

"It's better to choose where your money goes rather than letting the government decide," Ken says. "An endowment with ECF provides flexibility and ensures support for local organizations that make a difference."

Although Millcreek Nursery has closed, Ken and Jacquie's impact continues to grow. Their story is a reminder of how thoughtful planning can transform a lifetime of hard work into a lasting legacy of generosity. *ecf*

YOU CAN START A FUND, TOO!

Work with Edmonton Community Foundation to ensure your charitable giving is set up for long-term growth

MAKE A DIFFERENCE in your community. Edmonton Community Foundation can help ensure your charitable giving is set up for long-term growth and greater impact.

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Step 1

Speak with one of our philanthropy advisors about your charitable interests to determine which fund options are right for you. You can choose to support important causes locally, nationally or around the world.

Step 2

Once you've defined the objective of your fund, we'll create an agreement that captures your intentions. It's a straightforward document that explains the goal of your fund, how involved you would like to be in allocating grants, and other relevant details. There's no obligation for you during this process — we simply want to ensure we've documented your wishes correctly.

Step 3

It's time to make your gift. You can create your endowment with \$10,000 — donated all at once, or you can build to this granting threshold over time. This flexibility allows you, your family, staff or clients the opportunity to contribute to the fund in a meaningful way.

Step 4

When your fund is ready to grant, your level of involvement going forward is your choice. You could seek input from your family. Many businesses include employees or clients in deciding what causes to support each year. This becomes a powerful tool to showcase your commitment to what matters. You can also get creative with future fundraising efforts like special events, golf tournaments or corporate matching programs.

You make the decisions. We provide the information.

To learn more, visit ecf.ca



KIDS WANNA ROCK

Kids blow off after-school steam by playing sweet rock 'n' roll

By **STEVEN SANDOR**

Photos by Lyle Best



EVER SINCE BLACK ARTISTS of the 1950s taught us all that it was OK to take a bit of the blues, and add some R&B rhythm to it all, rock 'n' roll has become one of our most democratic art forms.

Putting aside the expansive perfectionism of bands like Pink Floyd or Rush, rock music has been about a low barrier to entry. Figure out a couple of chords, a paradiddle, and a couple of the most basic notes on bass, and you're off. Punk showed us that it was even better if you made mistakes along the way — they added character to the songs. Being in tune or on time was secondary to the music's message.

And that's why rock music is a fantastic medium for kids who want to do an afterschool activity that doesn't require sporting equipment. Supported by Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF), the Rock and Roll Society's Centre for Arts and Music brings music instruction to city schools, but there are no oboes or recorders. It's about guitars, drums, bass, vocals and keyboards. It's about teaching the kids some basic notes and having them bash out some songs in pretty quick order.

"We will take anybody and we will turn them into a fully functioning, performing band," says Program Manager and instructor Curtis Ross, whose voice comes across like a morning radio host. "Even though rock 'n' roll is decades old, at this point, kids are still pretty excited about electric guitars

and amps and hitting drums."

The program serves about 150 kids across Edmonton.

So, when the kids get the instruments, what are the first songs they learn? Ross says most parents will immediately think of the Ramones or AC/DC, bands that keep things simple. But he said the Ramones songs are too fast for most kids, and AC/DC, despite the riff-and-repeat style, are more complicated than the non-musician may think.

The Cranberries' political anthem "Zombie" and Fleetwood Mac's break-up tearjerker "Dreams" are two of the songs the kids first learn. They're not fast songs, and they're not packed with chord changes.

"They may not know a chord at first, but they'll quickly pick up a couple notes," says Ross, "Once they start playing together, all of a sudden you're performing a whole song."

"We know what songs are approachable for a group of new musicians. Thankfully, the rock catalogue is full of songs that have very low barriers to entry."

Amanda Sokol, the Marketing and Communications Manager for the Rock and Roll Society, recalls a discussion she had with one of the kids in the program — the student told her "they promised me rock music, who doesn't want to be a rock star?" And Sokol was told



that, yes, the program had delivered on that promise.

Why is this program so important? It's because exposure to the arts at a young age helps a student in every facet of his, her or their school life. A study by the Children's Music Workshop indicated the graduation rate for schools with music programs is 18 per cent higher than schools without them.

This is just one of the reasons ECF provided the Rock and Roll Society of Edmonton with a \$34,700 Community Grant in 2023 and a \$60,500 grant in 2024. The funding supported staff positions, enabling the Society to expand its Centre for Arts and Music Program to more schools.

"We know that after-school programs are essential for many parents and children," says Joanne Currie, ECF's Director of Grants and Community Engagement. "Beyond improving grades and graduation rates, these programs create safe, supportive environments where kids can engage with positive role models, while also helping parents balance their work and home lives."

Those hours after 3 p.m. can be risky times; the parents aren't yet home from work, so the kids often fend for themselves. And that's when they can get themselves into trouble. So, why not bash away at the guitar, instead?

"For a lot of kids, there's not something else for them to do after school," says Sokol. "If you ask some of them, I just go home, or I'd play video games or whatever. So, it's something to do after class. The parents like that. It's a safe space for their children to be.

"They also have a huge choice in the songs that are played, you know, within limits, of course. So I think that's something that maybe they don't get in other music programs ... I hear a lot from the students who I've spoken with that they're just happy to be with their friends as well, doing something that's different and something that they really like."

And, it's a free program. Let's face it, guitars are expensive. Drum kits require a lot of effort to lug around. So, having them set up and ready to go at

the local school is a big deal.

After the kids get familiar with the instruments, they're challenged to write their own songs. And they'll play them live, too. Ross says he's regularly blown away by the quality of music being produced by the kids.

"That's my favourite part of the program," he says. "I'm so proud of them. In this program, they go from learning basic covers to writing and recording their own music. Some of them come in with experience. Some of them have no experience at all. But, over the course of the school year, they do everything that a modern band would do. We do a recording session, we write songs, we do performances, we'll even do a photo shoot. Once the songs are finished, we publish them on Bandcamp and Spotify.

"As instructors, we're there to help and guide. And if we hear a really cool idea, we'll push for it and help them along with it."

In a world where all music is available because of streaming services, Sokol and Ross are amazed by the kids' out-of-time tastes. To them, everything is new, everything is interesting. A girl who loves Metallica goes down a guitar-player's rabbit hole and begins to learn all about the Delta Blues. A kid asks to play a deep cut from David Bowie's *Aladdin Sane*. Kids find songs from bands none of the instructors have even heard of.

As Bon Scott once sang, "It's a long way to the top, if you want to rock 'n' roll." But, thanks to this program, the kids are getting a boost to get them on their way. *ecf*



Artistic Accelerando

HOW EDMONTON COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
FAST TRACKS YOUNG CLASSICAL
MUSICIANS' CAREERS

By **CORY SCHACHTEL** Photos **LAUGHING DOG PHOTOGRAPHY**



Violin has always been part of Jacques Forestier's life, but he doesn't remember the first time he held or even heard one, because humans don't form memories before two years old.

"I don't remember a time when I *didn't* have [a] violin," he says. "I'd say my first memory probably goes back to when I was about four. I remember discovering on my own how to do vibrato."

That self-taught moment of learning to toggle between notes has reverberated throughout Forestier's life and career — which, at only 19 years old, is already substantial.

As a child of musician parents, it's no shock Forestier followed in their musical footsteps. But there's a difference between being musically inclined and maniacally interested in an instrument you've yet to even play.

"My mother's a violinist, so I'd go to her student recitals, and apparently I would be a real disturbance. I would just scream. And that wasn't like me. I was usually very calm and well behaved. So she thought, why don't I just give him a violin? And my focus, apparently, was insane. It was my happy place. We would do 30 minutes a day, and I would insist that I do more. I was in love with it from the beginning, and I think it's just increased ever since."

Accommodating prodigious talent at such a young age would make it difficult to lead a traditional school life, which is why Forestier's schooling was anything but. At first, he would stay home three days a week in the morning to practice. Then he started acting, in which he also excelled, landing a role in The Citadel Theatre and Theatre Calgary's productions of *Mary Poppins*. That ran for six months, which meant he had to move his classes entirely online, while still keeping up his violin habit. This was all before he was 10 years old. By the time he was 12, he started going to Calgary weekly to take a course for gifted musicians at Mount Royal University.

So how does a mom convince a school that her talented toddler should be exempt from attending in-person classes? Like all things artistic, it's better to show than tell.

"From what I recall, there was no pushback, but there was some confusion," Forestier explains. "Some of the teachers didn't really understand. So I remember one day, there was a show-and-tell presentation. I decided to bring my violin and my grandmother, who plays piano, and we played a five-minute work for them. The teacher basically came up after and said, OK, now I totally understand.' Once people saw, it just made more sense to them."



Plenty of people have seen Forestier perform since then, starting with his pro debut with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra when he was just 11. Since then, he's gone to festivals, programs, competitions and residencies in Ottawa, a half-dozen American cities (he's currently enrolled in the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia), Poland, Israel and Hannover, Germany, where in 2024 he became co-laureate of the Joseph Joachim Violin Competition.

That competition, held every three years, garnered him 25,000 euros. But he says the exposure alone changes a young violinist's life, which in his case includes receiving a



Photographed on location at The Francis Winspear Centre for Music

three-year loan of a violin made by Giovanni Battista Guadagnini in 1765. The instrument, which Forestier is “enjoying getting to know,” is worth well over \$1 million and somehow *doesn’t* come with a bullet-proof case. (What happens if he breaks it? “That’s *not* gonna happen,” he laughs.)

The violin may be a loan, but all that travel costs money — on top of the monthly costs of private lessons, instrument upkeep and recording sessions. But until bars start hosting open-mic nights for young classical musicians, the festival and competition circuit provides their only exposure, and travelling that circuit costs money — which is where Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) helps young artists like Forestier flourish. ▶

“I’d say my first memory probably goes back to when I was about four. I remember discovering on my own how to do vibrato.”

— Jacques Forestier



For over two decades, ECF has awarded the Ranald & Vera Shean Memorial Scholarships, Winspear and Alexandra Munn Scholarships, and the John and Andrea Wallin Awards to provide opportunity, exposure and the money needed to help talented young musicians reach their literal next stages — in Edmonton, and around the world.

Munn, who passed away in September 2023, was a musical prodigy in her own right, graduating from Juilliard at the age of 21, where she completed a four-year program in just two years. This was the start of her 60-year legacy of teaching and performing music across Alberta including conducting the Richard Eaton Singers as well as Da Camera Singers.

Ranald and Vera Shean, both members of Edmonton's Cultural Hall of Fame, were

highly respected teachers as well, and were known to help students, out of pocket, with tuition and travel. Each year, the John and Andrea Wallin Awards provide up to four students with financial support of between \$1,000 to \$8,000.

"It's been such a delight to see Jacques achieve so much," says Anna Opryshko, ECF's Student Awards Associate. "Our donors' dream of supporting future generations of Edmonton musicians is coming to life before our eyes, and it's truly wonderful."

Forestier's received all three of ECF's music awards over his still-less-than-10-year career, and thanks to years of obsessive practice, and plenty of ECF support, it's about to take off.

"For example, here at [The Curtis Institute], every student is tuition free. But room and board, which is required, is close to \$30,000 Canadian. My parents are both also classical musicians, [so] it would be very difficult to sustain that financially, without taking out a loan. All three of these scholarships have all played a pivotal role in where I am today. They've made this all possible for me, at the stage that I'm at now."

The stage he's at now requires a manager, which he got for an upcoming European tour, and a recording booth, which Warner Classics has provided for his debut album, to be released in 2026. "The artists who have recorded with Warner are really the best in the world," he says, adding that, without ECF's support, he wouldn't be recording and touring right along with them.

Wherever the future takes him, Forestier says Edmonton will never be far from his heart — or his virtuoso hands. "I feel like I'm still very much a part of [Edmonton's classical music scene]. I came back in October [2024] for a concert, and I'll be coming back for two more concerts [this] year. I come back all the time, and there are many presenters in Edmonton that I really hope to work with in the future. Because it's where I come from, and I owe a lot to the city, ECF and to my family." *ecf*



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The Sky is Falling

KEEPING CKUA ON AIR

By **CAROLINE BARLOTT**
Illustration **SCOTT CARMICHAEL**

Back in 2022, it was a normal day at the CKUA office for CEO Marc Carnes until he opened a newly arrived letter.

It warned that the company's satellite was experiencing fuel loss and would eventually fall out of orbit.

CKUA is an Alberta-wide radio station that relies on its satellite network to broadcast music, arts and culture programming across the province.

"I honestly just laughed," says Carnes. "Of course, it's falling. We always joke that nothing we do at CKUA is easy, and this is just another example of that."

It felt like a 'Chicken Little' moment... except the problem was real. No one could say when exactly it would fall, so it sent Carnes and the crew into problem-solving mode. They had to find a satellite provider ▶



orbit

signal

CKUA

ment

orbit

satellite

willing to accommodate an entire network of vendors while coming up with a huge chunk of money to cover it.

The former satellite had been in space for a few decades, so, while it was stressful to know it was coming to an end, it was not a complete surprise.

With the old network, CKUA would transmit a signal from its offices in Edmonton to Calgary, and then the signal would take a left to Mississauga, Ont., where it would be uploaded to the satellite.

But if the weather was bad in Mississauga, it might knock out a signal, even if it was a beautiful day in Alberta. “So, it was this weird thing where we’d get these satellite outages and it’s like, what’s going on? Well, there’s a storm in Ontario. It’s hard for people to understand it,” says Carnes.

Summer storm season in Ontario was brutal, so sometimes the crew wouldn’t know the network was even out in certain parts of the province until they received phone calls or emails from listeners.

“We were also dealing with older systems and we had challenges with it, so rather than lament the challenge, we went into it, like: OK, how do we make lemonade out of this?” says Carnes.

It was a chance to partner with Network Innovations, a global company with Canadian headquarters in Calgary.

One of CKUA’s board members worked there and, when he was told about the situation, he thought Network Innovations might be interested in helping out.

“It was an investment in CKUA, but we were able to distribute that not only to service the thousands of listeners in Edmonton but the tens of thousands across the province as well. So, it had a residual benefit on the community side of things.”

— Marc Carnes

satellite



signal

CKUA

Investment

The company normally does private satellites for oil and gas and private contracting, so this was a new experience for it, and an opportunity to do some research and development in the radio space.

“It was not just a board member saying: here’s money, go fix it,” says Carnes. “It was an opportunity for both businesses to work together and learn. And so, they were the ones who jumped to the table and helped cover a significant portion of the equipment costs by working with their partners. They were able to absorb a lot of the cost through their technical infrastructure and all that stuff. So, that was the saving grace there.”

Meanwhile, CKUA also applied for a Community Grant from Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF). Their application was successful and the funding helped cover the equipment costs to make the satellite network happen.

“CKUA is a vital part of our community,” says Melisa Zapisocky, ECF’s Grants Associate. “CKUA creates a welcoming community where music, arts and culture bring people together; showcasing countless Albertan artists over the years. We’re delighted to have assisted them in securing a new satellite, enabling them to continue sharing our community’s stories.”

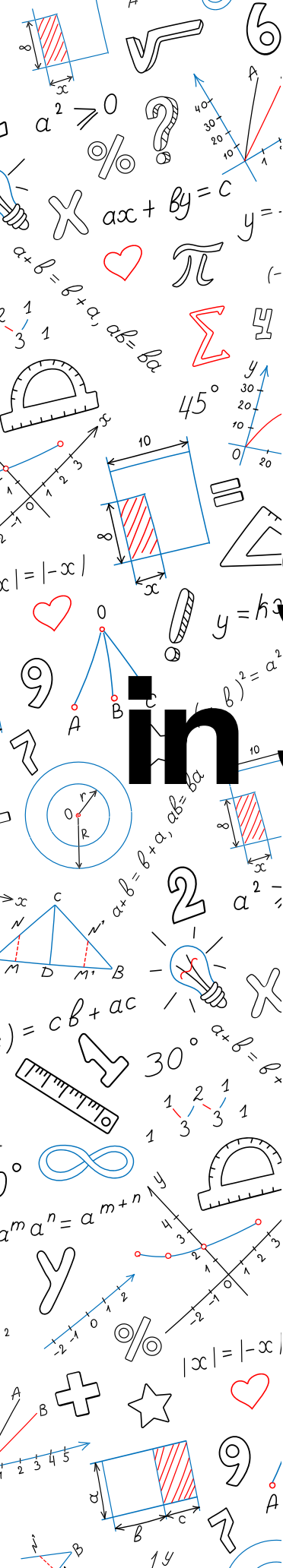
Carnes says the timing was perfect. And the funding helped CKUA leverage more private funding as well.

“What I appreciate about the ECF funding is that this is a project that benefited 16 communities, as it was technology and infrastructure that went into multiple communities,” says Carnes. “It was an investment in CKUA, but we were able to distribute that not only to service the thousands of listeners in Edmonton but the tens of thousands across the province as well. So, it had a residual benefit on the community side of things.”

And to Carnes, that’s really what CKUA is about. “What we do is radio, but why we exist is to build community and make community stronger,” he says.

Now, with the new satellite network, the radio station no longer has the issues it did with going off the air, so it can connect the community even more consistently. The system is much more advanced and can be much more easily upgraded and adaptive to changes in technology. Rather than having to replace components, now techs can just upgrade the software. Meanwhile, Network Innovations is more of a partner that’s up-to-date on what CKUA is doing rather than someone who just sends a bill.

“We do this really great programming that more and more people are seeking out and supporting, and that satellite connection is the lifeline. Without it, it’s just a bunch of people sitting together talking to themselves,” says Carnes. *ecf*



Sisters in STEM

Major math scholarship adds up to success for Salma and Sara Radwan

By **Lisa Catterall**

FOR MANY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS,

mathematics can be one of the hardest subjects to master. But for Salma and Sara Radwan, math is second nature.

The sisters are graduates of Eastglen High School, where they each graduated with top marks in math. Sara, who graduated in 2017, was the first in the family to be awarded Edmonton Community Foundation's (ECF) Probert Math Scholarship — an award of, at the time, \$16,000 over four years for post-secondary studies in engineering or a mathematics-related field. Today, the award provides \$20,000 over four years.

"When I was a couple of months into Grade 12, my teachers started seeing my grades and telling me about the scholarship," says Sara, who remembers working hard to keep her math grades up throughout the year. "I was so happy and grateful when they announced who the winner was."

As Sara went on to complete her degree in mechanical engineering at the University of

“David is now creating opportunities for future students at Eastglen, just as Mr. Probert once did for him. And with the scholarship being endowed, this legacy will continue for generations to come.”

— Anna Opryshko, ECF’s Student Awards Associate

Alberta, her younger sister Salma entered high school. She too, was drawn to mathematics, and soon enough was following in her sister’s footsteps. In 2024, Salma went on to win the scholarship and begin studying engineering at the University of Alberta.

“I wanted to go into something STEM-based, because I enjoy math and I was determined,” says Salma. “The scholarship really helped me go closer to that, to be an engineer hopefully in the future.”

With one year of tuition, books and supplies estimated to cost \$10,000, the scholarship made a significant difference in the financial cost of the girls’ studies. Their father also wanted to help out with the cost of their education, and winning the scholarship made that cost a little more attainable.

“He’s proud of us that we got the scholarship,” says Salma. “We had good grades and we were both going to engineering to do what we like and enjoy ourselves.”

The Probert Math Scholarship was established at ECF by David Cheriton, a computer scientist, professor emeritus at Stanford University and graduate of Eastglen High School. It was there in the late 1960s that Cheriton first met Elwyn Probert, a mathematics teacher who would leave a lasting impression.

“I’d certainly view him as one of the best, if not the best, math teacher I’ve had at all levels,” says Cheriton, who, after Eastglen, went on to complete a Master of Science and Doctor of Philosophy degree in computer science.

Cheriton remembers Probert as “strict, but fun” — the kind of teacher who enjoyed the knowledge he was sharing with students. He also remembers Probert as a forward-thinking instructor, who had his eye on the potential of computers and technology.

“It’s in some ways dazzling to look back and say in 1967 you have a high school teacher, in a math class that walks in and says, ‘computers are the future,’” says Cheriton. “So the notion that this was the future was insane in some ways

because you think, how could this be the future when virtually nobody’s encountered it yet?”

Aside from fostering an interest in mathematics and technology in students, Probert’s teaching methods also had an impact on Cheriton. Rather than teaching dry, textbook-based lessons, Cheriton remembers Probert bringing real-world, practical examples into his lessons — a method Cheriton would later go on to use when teaching computer science at Stanford.

“Some teachers come into class and just say, OK, lesson number 46, blah, blah, blah, and drag you through it. Mr. Probert brought a little more interest with comments and ideas from the outside world — that’s what stuck with me,” he says.

“It’s always inspiring to witness the ripple effect of the positive impact people have on one another in the community,” says Anna Opryshko, ECF’s Student Awards Associate. “David is now creating opportunities for future students at Eastglen, just as Mr. Probert once did for him. And with the scholarship being endowed, this legacy will continue for generations to come.”

Through the scholarship, Cheriton hopes to carry on Probert’s legacy and teachings with future generations, encouraging them to explore and adopt a mathematical way of thinking.

“The math education I got in grade school and high school was really fundamental to be able to pursue the career I pursued. It’s not just learning mathematics per se, but there’s kind of a discipline of thinking that comes with mathematics and there’s a certain aesthetics of how you tackle things,” he explains.

“When you have young people that you can give them the slight nudge in the direction and they go on and the nudge gets amplified into a great career, it’s kind of a wonderful return on investment.” *ecf*

A hand-drawn diagram with a blue border and red diagonal hatching at the top. It contains the quadratic formula $x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{D}}{2a}$ and the discriminant $D = b^2 - 4ac$ in a separate box below it.

A LEGACY IN EDMONTON ARTS

Remembering Grace Rumbold

By Caitlin Hart

PHILANTHROPIST AND ARTS BOOSTER Grace Rumbold leaves behind a legacy felt across the country.

A long-time supporter of the Edmonton Opera and the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, among many other causes, Grace made a significant impact on the city's art scene. She passed away Oct. 8, 2024 at the age of 89.

Raised on a farm near Rosebud, Alta., she settled in Edmonton in 1958 with her husband, Arnold. Together, the couple took on many philanthropic projects, such as donating to the Trans Canada Trail, giving to the Winspear Expansion campaign and making significant donations to Edmonton's post-secondary institutions. The pair also shared a passion for supporting women who are underrepresented in their chosen fields, establishing grants for women studying the trades at NAIT. Over their 67-year marriage, the pair fell in love with Edmonton's music and theatre scenes, where they were known and loved by many.

Their son, Dave Rumbold, describes Grace as a naturally generous and genuine person. An active member of the Edmonton and District Quilting Guild and avid traveller, Grace lived a life full of social engagements and activity. Most of her career was spent with the City of Edmonton's City Clerk's office, from which she retired in 1999.

"She loved the vibrancy and the buzz of it," Dave says.

The couple donated, not for the cachet, but because it was just what fortunate people do.

"They weren't trying to impress anybody. They would have done it even if there was no published recognition. They just really believed in supporting the arts and the Edmonton community as a whole," Dave adds.

Through the fund the Rumbolds established, over \$600,000 was distributed to different causes. The donor-advised fund allowed the Rumbolds to work with Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) to select deserving organizations. Edmonton's art scene benefited from their giving, as did Camp He Ho Ha, a place for children and adults with disabilities.

Some of their most significant giving was to the Edmonton Opera, which the couple attended together for decades.

Inspired by the Shean Piano and String Competition, the Rumbolds launched their own music competition to boost opera in Edmonton.

In establishing the Rumbold Vocal Prize Fund through ECF in 2022, emerging vocalists from across the country found their doorways into the Canadian

opera world. The Rumbold Vocal Prize gives early career artists a chance to foster connections with opera professionals and improve their craft.

The vocal prize program provides four classical vocalists with flights and accommodations in Edmonton. Selected from a pool of 100 or more applicants, the competition draws some of the best in Canada. Two internationally renowned opera singers are brought in to teach a week-long run of workshops, master classes, coaching and rehearsals, capped off with judged recitals at the end of the week. All participants are awarded cash prizes to help their opera careers. The program also provides the opportunity for University of Alberta vocal students to learn from these professionals and one student is selected by the University faculty to participate in the Vocal Prize Week.

Many previous Rumbold Vocal Prize winners have been hired by the Edmonton Opera, and gone on to perform in France and Germany.

The competition is "like a beacon of light on the art scene," says Joel Ivany, Edmonton Opera's artistic director.

"The wonderful gift of this is because it's an endowed gift, it's something we can ensure can happen every year and for us to be able to do this is just a great way to stay connected with the singing community across Canada," he says.

Grace's generous giving ensures the Edmonton Opera can keep bringing young artists to the city and elevate Edmonton's position in Canada's arts and culture communities.

Her legacy lives on, not only in the funds she created and money she gave, but as an example of unassuming generosity.

"She never thought she was anybody special even though, really she was," says Dave. *ecf*



L-R, Danielle MacMillan, Sydney Baedke, Grace Rumbold, Jamal Al-Titi, Arnold Rumbold, Nicholas Burns and Isabel Bayrakdarian at the 2023/24 Rumbold Vocal Prize Concert.



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