



HANCOCK PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOUNDATION, INC.

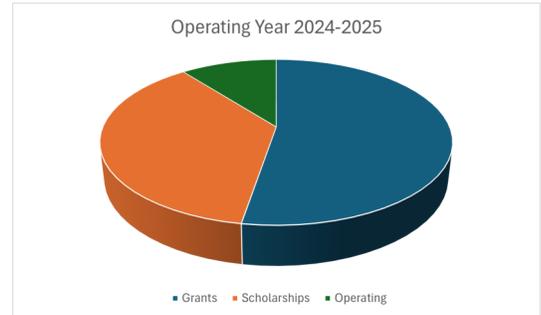
501 Campus Drive, Hancock, MI 49930

December 2025

### Message from HPSF Board of Directors

The Hancock Public Schools Foundation supports all levels of academics in the school district from Pre-K through High School through grants and scholarships. Endowment funds are managed locally and used prudently with a cap of 5% granted in a school year.

This would not be possible without your support. Thank you!



### Garden to Plate

High School teacher Leanne Laakonen approached the HPS Foundation the spring of 2022 with a grant request for an apple pulper, mesh bag, and a cider press. This September the program got off the ground. The school property provides access to many apple trees and, using those wild apples, students pulped, strained, and pressed them into cider.

Mrs. Laakonen reported that, "This is an authentic, hands-on learning experience." She also has plans for the future. The cider-making program "would kick-start a variety of projects, such as, learning about apple varieties and preservation techniques, selling cider at sporting events (imagine hot cider at football games!), creating marketing, design, and business plans for potential fund-raising, and sharing their knowledge with students in the elementary grades."



### Scholarships 2025

Seventeen students received scholarship awards from the HPS Foundation totaling more than \$35,000. Congratulations to all of you!

- |                |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|
| Sadie Biekkola | Emily L'Esperance |
| Jynna Carlson  | Emily Moore       |
| Reese Driscoll | Jayden Nuttall    |
| Andrew Dulong  | Dustin Pietila    |
| Sofia Freeman  | Kay Pietila       |
| Max Heinonen   | Addison Pizzi     |
| Ella Keranen   | Mallory Sporalski |
| Brooke Koskela | Rayna Towles      |
| Hunter LaCourt |                   |



## Donor Spotlight

### A Conversation with Donn Dennis '75

Last year, HCH alumnus Donn Dennis chose to make a significant gift to the Foundation with the goal of assisting students with their continued academic pursuits. Dean Woodbeck, HPS Foundation Member, spoke to Donn about his decision to create a scholarship endowment.



What do you do when you retire after creating companies and holding an endowed professorship in anesthesiology at a major medical school? You set up a six-monitor, full-time investment trading room. "I was bored in retirement, and this keeps me busy," says HCH alumnus Donn Dennis.

You can still hear the Copper Country vibe in his voice, and his sincere gratitude for the opportunities he has experienced, as he discusses why he has provided \$250,000 to the Hancock Public Schools Foundation for scholarships.

"Being a first-generation college student, I was blessed with many wonderful educational institutions, teachers, mentors, and helpful relatives," he says. "I believe it is really critical to give back so that these groups can help others in their careers."

Donn graduated from Hancock Central High School in 1975, earned a Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering from Michigan Tech in 1979, and headed for a process design engineering position at Dow Corning in Midland, Michigan. After a year, he decided to go back to school and earned a Conoco fellowship to pursue a PhD in chemical engineering at the University of Michigan.

But then he became intrigued with biology through a faculty member in biomedical engineering. He transitioned to the University of Michigan medical school, earned his MD, and completed a residency in anesthesiology at the University of Florida. He remained in Gainesville with a faculty position at the medical school.

"My field was pharmacology and molecular pharmacology. For most of my career, the president of the University of Florida let me pursue entrepreneurial activities. The thing that caught my eye was developing technologies to reduce risk in health care settings. Health care itself can help people but there are a lot of potential risks when you go in the hospital."

In addition to holding his academic appointment, he also held executive positions in companies in California. He later founded companies in the Gainesville area and retired when one was purchased by Philips Healthcare.

Donn cites several high school teachers as providing a firm foundation for his career. "The teachers that stand out in my mind are Bill Gaffney, who taught math, and Susan Warrington, who taught chemistry. I also knew her husband, Terry Warrington, through the chemical engineering program at Michigan Tech, where he taught chemistry."

He added that the Kearly family, the Salani family, and the Parker family all had positive influences as friends, teachers, and coaches. "I've been all over the world traveling on different business ventures and presenting, and I worked with a lot of investment groups. I don't think there is a group of nicer people than in the Copper Country. They are genuine, down-to-earth people."

Donn established The Dorothy & Philip Dennis Scholarship Fund to honor his parents, which made its first awards this past year. "My parents really sacrificed to help me get over the finish line," he commented. The Dennis scholarships are available to students pursuing college at any level, or planning a career through a trade school." My dad was a master machinist. He was a skilled guy who could do anything, so I wanted to make this wide open to people"

**Contributions from November 5, 2024 to November 21, 2025**

**Unrestricted Contributions**

Anonymous  
 HCH Class of 1966  
 Karen Hubbard  
 Jim & Ann Kalen  
 Barbara Kauppi  
 Ellen Kehoe  
 William Penegor  
 Charlen & Tim Schnelle

**Scholarships**

Donn Dennis, M.D.

***In Honor of***

**Karen Hubbard**

Heather & Craig Galecka

***In Memory of***

**Paul Aho '71**

Bob & Paula Nutini

**James Ahola**

Christine Ahola

**Marilyn Montroy Cusenza '74**

Jim Cusenza

**Mary Cybulski '73**

Sara Niemeyer & Bill Gale

**Nancy Gaspardo Dionne '55**

Tami & Todd Bessner

**Nancy Fenton**

Suzanne Houle

**William Gaffney**

Suzanne Houle

**George Houle '63**

Neil & Tammy Ahola  
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**Helen Kearly**

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**Bill Lohela '51**

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**Steve Manderfield '77**

Suzanne Houle

**John Manninen '66**

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**Philip Monticello '53**

Jeanne Eilola  
 Sara L. Niemeyer

**David Norgard '78**

Karen & Don McDonald

**Peter Norgard '81**

Karen & Don McDonald

**Michael O'Meara**

Carol & David Waisanen

**Charlotte Nomellini Pera '62**

Mary Armstrong  
 Debra & John Vaara

**Bill Polkinghorn '64**

Suzanne Houle

**Pete Sandretto, Sr. '37**

Anita & Pete Sandretto

**Alan Silvola '86**

Jeanne Eilola  
 Sara L. Niemeyer  
 Paula & Bob Nutini  
 Amy & Daryl Pierce  
 Marilyn Sporalaki  
 Carol & David Waisanen

**David Strong '70**

Sara L. Niemeyer  
 Bob & Paula Nutini

**Dennis Walikainen '74**

David & Deborah Dow  
 Ellen Kehoe  
 Sara L. Niemeyer  
 Paula & Bob Nutini  
 Carol & David Waisanen  
 Dean & Janice Woodbeck  
 Peggy Ylitalo

**John Ylitalo '65**

Carole Ahola  
 Bob & Carla Banfield  
 Patricia Carlson  
 David & Deborah Dow  
 John & Karla Lawton  
 Mary & Ron Mikkola  
 Paula & Bob Nutini  
 Susan Stone  
 Superior National Bank  
 Ruth Wisti

**Mike Ziegler '77**

Suzanne Houle

Your contributions make all the difference in supporting the important work of the Foundation. Make your tax-deductible gift online at <http://www.hancockpublicschools.org/school-foundation.php> or complete the form below. Please make checks payable to Hancock Public Schools Foundation and mail to 501 Campus Drive, Hancock, MI 49930. Thank you!

**Hancock Public Schools Foundation: Making a Difference**

501 Campus Drive, Hancock, MI 49930

**Yes, I/We want to make a difference!**

Enclosed is my/our tax-deductible gift in the amount of:

Unrestricted

In Honor of

In Memory of

Name

Address

Phone

Email





Hancock Public Schools Foundation  
501 Campus Drive  
Hancock MI 49930



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