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Evanston Community Foundation aims to expand in 30th year

[Sydney Stone](#), Reporter
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The Evanston Community Foundation celebrated 30 years of assisting local organizations, highlighting its plans to expand its efforts in the near future.

ECF development officer Amy Monday said the foundation aims to grow their endowment funds to help Evanston residents and those who work in the city.

“ECF is Evanston’s largest cheerleader,” ECF President and CEO Monique Jones said. “What makes us so unique is that we look at things holistically. ... We’re about the whole, and we’re interested in addressing needs in all of Evanston.”

Mark Muenzer, the city’s director of community development, said ECF might begin to play a bigger role in the community if state funding becomes less available in the future. Last year, Evanston officials anxiously awaited news of state budget cuts after Gov. Bruce Rauner’s initial budget proposed \$3.75 million in funding cuts to Evanston.

“Foundations and grant-making entities that serve populations that are in need of social services may have an opportunity to play a larger role,” he said.

The nonprofit has partnered with many community organizations and focuses on grant making, other financial support and leadership development, Jones said.

One of the foundation’s longest standing partnerships is with Northwestern University’s Dance Marathon. ECF and DM have worked together since 1998 and have awarded 298 grants to 128 organizations. Since 1998, DM has raised over \$1 million for ECF and has become one of the foundation’s top four contributors.

“By supporting ECF continuously as our secondary beneficiary, we can give back to the community that’s given us so much,” said Medill senior Katharine Currault, DM marketing and media co-chair.

The foundation also helps DM organizers learn about what it means to be philanthropic in Evanston because ECF can connect students directly to nonprofits, Jones said.

Currault said DM hosted two service days last year to work with organizations that have benefited from ECF grants. She said the first service day this year will take place on Nov. 6.

“It’s really important that you have a foundation that’s Evanston-specific, that meets the needs of the community,” Muenzer said. “There are so many foundations out there that do great work in a number of different communities, but, when you have an entity that has the history that ECF has, that’s obviously very helpful.”

Jones said ECF plans to engage more with the community in the future through social media, a blog and more newsletters. Muenzer said it’s important to have a foundation that focuses specifically on Evanston and that has a long history with the community.

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