Life-changing work of Community Foundation highlighted at silver anniversary celebrations

Tuesday 12 March, 2024

Tens of thousands of people have been supported by grants of more than £65m, thanks to 25 years of work by a Cumbrian charitable organisation.

The revelation came as Cumbria Community Foundation marked the beginning of its silver anniversary celebrations at its Annual Dinner in Barrow on Thursday [March 7].

In 1999, it was the dream of John Fryer-Spedding and the late Arthur Sanderson, along with trustees drawn from across the county, to create an organisation that would grow philanthropy and generate new funds to support the people and communities of Cumbria.

Now, 25 years later, the Foundation is celebrating the thousands of lives impacted by its efforts.

Speaking at the event – which was attended by Mr Fryer-Spedding himself – chief executive Andy Beeforth highlighted the amazing work carried out by the Foundation in the years since.

“During that time we have been at the heart of Cumbria’s communities, channelling the generosity and philanthropy of people and businesses backing more than 4,000 charities and tens of thousands of individuals,” he said.

“So far, with your support and people like you we have given out more than £65M and built our endowed assets to almost £30M.

“In Cumbria we retain strong communities, a network of more than 6,000 charities and community organisations, a willingness to help our neighbour and to step forward and act when help is needed.”

Andy added: “The role of the Community Foundation is to power and strengthen those communities and organisations.”

The celebration dinner was held at Abbey House Hotel in Barrow-in-Furness, to commemorate the grant-making charity awarding its very first grant in Furness back in 1999 to STEPS, a charity providing support for children experiencing bereavement and separation.

The Foundation has come a long way since then. It has developed a real understanding of the challenges facing different communities across Cumbria and created grant-making funds and grants programmes, providing long-term, sustainable solutions.

The Foundation has supported its local communities through difficult times, from responding to the Foot and Mouth disease in 2001 and flooding in 2005, 2009 and 2015, to providing vital funding for charities, individuals and families.

This year’s Winter Warmth Appeal raised more than £500,000 for the second winter running, providing life-changing support for older people otherwise forced to choose between heating or eating.

The Foundation now manages more than 100 grant making funds on behalf of families and businesses and works in collaboration with partners, including Sellafield Ltd and the NHS, to distribute around £6 million in grants every year across the county.

"Philanthropy, at its core, is the desire to make a positive impact on the world,” said Andy. “The power of philanthropy can change lives.

“None of this could have been achieved without the help of our generous supporters - ordinary people and businesses who want to invest in and give back to their local communities."

As part of the 25th celebrations, businesses and individuals alike are being encouraged to get involved through setting up an Acorn Fund – these funds are invested and grown over time through regular and one-off donations, with the returns being used to fund grants and ensure long-term support for voluntary and community organisations to improve the lives of the people and communities of Cumbria.

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The Foundation has already teamed up with Cumbria Tourism, which has started an Acorn Fund to celebrate its own 50th anniversary.

And, later in the spring, the Foundation is launching a corporate fundraising campaign encouraging people to get active and raise money for the Cumbria Fund, which funds projects to improve lives countywide through a focus on health and mental wellbeing, increasing life and employability skills and strengthening community cohesion.

To find out more about the Acorn Fund, corporate fundraising campaign or Anniversary celebrations, please get in touch via enquiries@cumbriafoundation.org

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