

A LASTING *Legacy*

Philanthropy does not have to be a solo endeavor. It lends itself well to a variety of ideas and opinions, benefiting from the decision-making and support of individuals with a shared desire to give back.

Giving circles are one way groups of donors with The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation can do so effectively. Donors come together to share resources and decide how and to whom funds from the circle should be granted. African American Philanthropy in Action (AAPA) is one such giving circle at TGKVF, created in August 2013 to "address the societal ills facing the African American community in West Virginia" by focusing on



**African American
Philanthropy
In Action** A GIVING CIRCLE



Mildred Holt



MLK Day Mildred Holt
check presentation to AAPA

The African American Philanthropy in Action giving circle inspires and assists with contributions to communities throughout West Virginia.

African American-led and -focused organizations primarily in the areas of education, arts and culture, and community economic development.

“We’ve been together for a while now,” says Melvin Jones, AAPA president. “We pool our funds and listen to proposals from nonprofits that either benefit the African American community or are led by an African American.” So far, AAPA has awarded at least two grants per year, furthering the chosen organizations’ particular projects and, in turn, furthering the giving circle’s mission of philanthropy, one of their primary goals. “We’ve got two goals: Increase the awareness and significance of giving circles in the African American community and provide a vehicle for making contributions through collaborative efforts.”

These collaborative efforts come in all shapes and sizes; the circle is open to all. In fact, in January 2025, AAPA joined in celebrating the legacy of the late Morris K. and Mildred Ruth T. Holt, long-time and beloved West Virginia educators, at the Charleston-Institute (WV) Chapter of the Links, Incorporated Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Celebration. Almost a year prior, the Morris K. & Mildred Ruth T. Holt Estate made a gift to TGKVF and stipulated that AAPA manage the distribution of grants to further the Holts’ goal of supporting their community and the education of children within that community. “Mildred heard about us and saw us in action and signed on to the concept,” Jones says. “We thought it was a good idea and made sure her contributions are maximized. She is relying on us to make that judgment for her.”

Attorney Kitty Dooley, a friend and advisor of the Holts, was a key player in developing the connection to TGKVF. The idea for the fund came from Mildred Holt prior to her passing, and conversations soon started on how to accomplish

it. “As we discussed it, I said, ‘This is something we could do through The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation,’” says Dooley. “After checking with Michelle Foster, it was indeed something we could look to do.” As a part of that, she says, there would need to be some folks who were knowledgeable about the direct needs of the community and could make decisions about grants that could be supported from the Holts’ fund. Those folks were AAPA’s dedicated members.

Dooley believes that it is important to leave a legacy, and that’s exactly what the Holts and AAPA have done—through Mildred’s work as an educator in Kanawha County, Morris’ work in higher education, and the perpetual gift that now lives on through TGKVF. “For others who are interested in leaving a legacy in a similar way, and there are many ways to do that, this is one of the best ways a legacy can be left in your name—to support something that is important to the community,” she says.

Jones agrees. “The main thing is paying it forward when given a gift or an advantage. We want to make sure you can pass that on. Pay it on to the next generation of philanthropists and make sure they understand that, for any community to have this kind of activity and philanthropy, they say, ‘We have benefited from the elders of the past.’”

That legacy of giving will be carried on, shared and encouraged in the hearts of future philanthropists. “Generations to come will know the names of Holts,” says Dooley. “As long as people are speaking your name, you never die. You live on. And that’s what’s going to happen with these two people.”

