



## *Friends of the Foundation:* Dennis & Emily Knuth

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One of the first things Dennis and Emily Knuth did in 2010 when they established a home and dental practice in Greencastle was create an unrestricted endowment at the Putnam County Community Foundation.

They didn't do it primarily to honor a loved one, although they did name it after Emily's grandfather, giving it the moniker: The Charles A. Jones Family Community Endowment.

They didn't do it to provide scholarship money for a particular field of interest or school, although 29 of Emily's relatives, including Emily herself, attended DePauw—and Dennis is passionate about his alma mater, The Ohio State University.

They didn't do it to support any special projects in Greencastle or Putnam County, although as they settled into the community they became participants and advocates in a variety of organizations, especially the Putnam County Museum and the Greencastle Civic League.

And they certainly didn't do it impulsively; they are a young couple with small children, a fledgling business, and for Emily, part-time work both in commercial real estate and for DePauw's Prindle Institute for Ethics. They did it with specific intention.

"We believe in paying it forward," explains Dennis. "We believe in the mission of the Foundation. Our business and our home are here, and we're going to live here a long time. We believe we should pay it forward, so the time to start was when we moved here." Emily agrees. "We have faith in our life in this community, and we believe the Community Foundation is the right place to merge our resources with others' resources, providing the best use of money for projects that the community needs. We know many people set up memorial funds later in their lives, but we wanted the beginning of our life in Greencastle to also be the beginning of our pledge to this place."

Dennis and Emily met in Cincinnati, Ohio, where she had moved to work in commercial real estate after graduating from DePauw, and where he was working as an electrical engineer. She encouraged him when he decided to switch careers to dentistry. His goal was to practice in a small town, and when the right opportunity turned up in Greencastle, the die was cast. Greencastle, after all, was the home place of Emily's clan, who first settled in the area in the 1820s, as well as the town where she grew up and was educated. "Our children are the eighth generation to live on this land," says Emily. "We think this place is really special, and we want to be a part of keeping its history alive and making it a better place to live and work."

Emily also has a particular perspective on the Community Foundation, as her family was instrumental in its organization. Her grandparents, Charles and Ann Jones, following a family tradition of philanthropic and civic



**Dennis and Emily Knuth Family**  
Fall 2012

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involvement (Charlie's mother, Clara Sharp Jones, was the first woman elected to a county office), decided in 1970s that they would like to donate a portion of the family farm as the site for a new hospital. It turned out that the transaction was not as simple as they expected.

About the same time, some communities around the country were experimenting with the idea of public charities that would collect and pool charitable donations, both cash and noncash, and then disburse the income earned on the assets to achieve public good. Charlie talked with his son Stephen C. Jones (Emily's father) about the concept, because Steve was then living in an Ohio town that had established a community foundation.

When Steve moved back to Greencastle in 1983 to open a business, he brought his experience with and more information about community foundations to his cousin, Robert Evans. Bob Evans was enthused, and with his kitchen table as a gathering spot, shared the idea with more friends. As a result, in 1985, the Putnam County Community Foundation was established as Putnam County's permanent philanthropic endowment.

There was still one more reason, in addition to their beliefs and backgrounds, which spurred the Knuths to establish their endowment when they did. "2010 was the silver anniversary for the foundation," recalls Emily, "and there was a dollar-for-dollar match for contributions. If we could come up with our money, the timing was ideal."

Establishing the endowment has turned out to be only the beginning of the beginning. The Knuths continue to add to their endowment, as well as to other Community Foundation funds that are meaningful to them. They pay close attention, with pleasure and pride, to the grants disbursed.

"Whether the grant is for seed money to start a project, or for matching contributions to increase public support, or to cover part of an expense—the Foundation is a way to take a big project and make it financially more manageable," points out Dennis. Plus, "the endorsement from the Foundation gives legitimacy to a program."

He adds, "The variety of projects that are funded is one of the reasons we wanted our fund to be an unrestricted endowment. It is money that can be used for any needs the county has, and there is more flexibility as those needs change over time."

"It is so exciting to see how many different groups receive funds," Emily says. "It's just amazing how it is all intertwined. There is not a part of it that does not touch our lives, and the lives of our family, every day."

**NOTE:** *Written by Anna Lyon Baker, this is the fourth in a series of stories about Foundation "friends" who have made a positive impact on the quality of life in our community. The Community Foundation welcomes suggestions of other people who should be recognized as Friends of the Foundation, and we remain deeply grateful for the friendship and support of so many people, near and far. Thank you!*

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