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Big gifts give Lodi community a financial boost

Nonprofit foundation now a \$33 million asset thanks to large donations

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Two decades ago, a small group of community leaders brainstormed ideas to create a permanent source of financial support for Lodi.

The end result was the Lodi Community Foundation, a philanthropic organization that has supported veterans, the arts and other programs and services in the area.

As the foundation marks its 20th anniversary, its vision to support the community has taken a profound leap forward thanks to three residents whose long-planned legacy gifts came to fruition in 2025.

The LCF said the gifts have transformed the organization from a \$9 million foundation into a \$33 million community asset able to serve the region with greater reach and responsiveness.

The first gift received was nearly \$22 million from the Sheila Wishek Estate in January, and the foundation's board contacted a nonprofit consultant to help develop policies to distribute the donation.

Born and raised in Lodi, Wishek passed away on Jan. 12, 2024 in San Francisco and left millions of dollars to 18 organizations, including St. Anne's Church and school, the Lodi Woman's Club, Salvation Army, Lodi Memorial Hospital Foundation, Lodi Boys and Girls Club, the Hutchins Street Square Foundation and the Lodi Public Library Foundation.

Last year, her estate gifted \$1 million to the San Joaquin County Historical Society's Pioneer Village project, which will transform a portion of Micke Grove Regional Park into an interactive 19th century town.

The Amelia Ernst Fund benefits Adventist Health Lodi Memorial Hospital's Adult Day Care Program at Hutchins Street Square. The program is for older and disabled adults who cannot fully care for themselves.

The foundation said Ernst was a beloved teacher whose warmth, intelligence and dedication left a lasting impression on everyone she met. Her kindness extended beyond her professional accomplishments, and she was known for the ability to connect with people of all ages, always offering a listening ear, wise guidance, and heartfelt encouragement.

She passed away on Sept. 5, 2024.

The Darrell Drummond Legacy Fund is dedicated to being "iconically" philanthropic, the foundation said, creating opportunities for philanthropists, nonprofits and the Lodi community as a whole.

It was Drummond who suggested the idea of creating the foundation, and persuaded other community members to get it off the ground.

Once the foundation was successfully operating, Drummond stepped back and encouraged others to lead the organization to greater success.

Drummond, former owner of Drummond & Associates died on April 15, 2022 at the age of 62.

"Each of them made arrangements years earlier to ensure their charitable values would continue well beyond their lifetimes," the foundation said in a social media post. "Their foresight ensures that future generations will benefit from grants and capacity support for local nonprofits and the community initiatives their legacies set in motion."

The foundation said the newly strengthened Lodi Legacy Fund, along with other endowed funds, will provide annual, permanent support to nonprofits working on behalf of Lodi residents.

To learn more about the foundation's legacy funds, visit tinyurl.com/LCFlegacyfund

