

GRAND GRANTS

- ◆ Going to the local library and borrowing books for free is a privilege most Americans take for granted. Yet less than a century ago, the idea of equal access to books and educational materials was revolutionary and controversial. It was the generosity and vision of one man, Andrew Carnegie, that created more than 2,500 libraries worldwide during the early 1900s. Nearly every community that requested support from Carnegie or his foundation - Carnegie Corporation of New York - received it, and by the 1920s, funds from Carnegie and his foundation had led to the construction of 1,679 public libraries in the United States alone. Today, these libraries, each a monument to the grand architectural style of the time, are an integral part of this nation's public library network.
- ◆ It was only recently that people in this country and the world lived in fear of the deadly, crippling effects of polio. In December 1994, the Pan American Health Organization announced that polio finally had been eradicated from the Western Hemisphere. The visions of people in iron lungs and heavy braces have been all but erased from this nation's memory because of the Salk vaccine, developed by Dr. Jonas Salk in 1953. Salk was able to establish and equip his virus laboratory, located at the University of Pittsburgh, because of a 1948 grant from the Sara Scaife Foundation. Other foundations also supported Salk's work, but it was the Scaife Foundation that put up the initial risk capital and provided a follow-up grant two years later.
- ◆ The development of rocket science was a necessary precursor to space exploration - an area of strategic importance to America and to satellite communications, which touch our lives today in various ways. It was foundation money that permitted a scientist to experiment and discover the technology that helped this nation become the first to place a man on the moon. After having built a rocket that could travel in a vacuum, physics professor Robert H. Goddard received a small grant from the Hodgkins Fund of the Smithsonian Institution to build a high-altitude version of it. He succeeded in 1926, when he launched a rocket that flew 41 feet in the air for 2.5 seconds. Subsequent launches caught the attention of neighbors, police and reporters, who considered his efforts a joke. Taking Goddard's efforts seriously, however, was Harry Guggenheim, who consulted with Charles Lindbergh on the feasibility of Goddard's ideas. Lindbergh persuaded Guggenheim's father, Daniel, to provide support over a four year period for Goddard's work. Ultimately, the Daniel and Florence Guggenheim Foundation funded Goddard's work for 11 years.
- ◆ In the early 1950s, engineer-inventor Dr. John V. N. Dorr, had "revolutionary highway theory." He suggested that at night and when rain, snow or fog impaired vision, drivers hugged the white lines painted in the middle of highways. Dorr believed this led to numerous accidents and that painting a white line along the outside shoulders of the highways would save lives. Dorr convinced highway engineers in Westchester County, New York, to test his theory along a stretch of highway with curves and gradients. The decrease in accidents was dramatic, and a follow-up test in Connecticut had similar results. Dorr then used his own foundation, the Dorr Foundation of New York, to publicize the demonstration's results. Although state funds are now used to paint white lines on the shoulders of this nation's highways, every person who travels in a motor vehicle is indebted to Dorr and his foundation the implementation of this life saving discovery.
- ◆ In the early 1970s, long-term care for the terminally ill was a frustrating and saddening experience for families. A group led by Florence Wald, dean of the nursing school of the Yale-New Haven Medical Center, asked foundations to fund a feasibility study of opening a hospice in New Haven, Connecticut. Simultaneous support from the Van Ameringen Foundation, the Ittleson Foundation and the Commonwealth Fund assisted in establishing and staffing a hospice to care for 100 terminally ill patients in their homes as well as in a 44 bed facility. This program became a model for hospital and home care of terminally ill patients and a training center for hospice workers.



We appreciate the generosity of Jeff Whitham for allowing the Western Kansas Community Foundation to office inside Western State Bank and for providing our furniture.

