OUR ANNUAL LETTER TO ALASKA
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CONVENING

to come together especially for a public purpose
When my grandparents E.A. Rasmuson and Jenny Olson met and married in Yakutat at the dawn of the 20th century, they embraced the Tlingit culture, learned the language and opened their minds and hearts to the people of this beautiful land. Our core family values — building community, bringing people together, encouraging everyone to help others — are etched into Rasmuson Foundation culture, down to the very spot where we gather.

Our board room features a big round table, a shape chosen for good reason. Around a circle, we can all look at one another, see who is speaking and who seems poised to do so. Everyone, from a community volunteer to the CEO of a corporation, feels equal. There is no worry about who sits at the head — or the foot. The first one was made some 20 years ago by Anchorage furniture maker and civic leader Ernie Hall. When we moved three years ago to bigger offices, we expanded to a bigger table, made by another woodworker, Mike Kurtzweil of Wasilla. Groups convene around the table whether to work on homelessness, healthcare or awards for talented artists. Our board meets there. So does our staff, every week.

In 2018, we entered new territory with our homelessness initiative. We also reached a milestone in grantmaking. From the first $125 we paid out in 1955 for a film projector to the last check mailed last year, our grant awards have amounted to more than $400 million.

My father, Elmer Rasmuson, said “helping others is an Alaskan tradition.” In the coming months as we as a state work through challenges, let’s keep thinking about those family values of doing what’s right and taking care of one another, no matter where we are sitting.
DEAR ALASKANS

Almost 25 years ago, we called together a group of partners and funders for the very first time. Our challenge was how to support an innovative program for young women who struggled with alcohol, a way to prevent fetal alcohol syndrome. Our endowment at that time was small, so we only had $25,000 to give. But through convening other interested donors, we helped raise $2 million for Southcentral Foundation to build a proper home for Dena A Coy, which means The People’s Grandchildren in the Dena’ina language.

Since then we’ve hosted hundreds of convenings big and small. People usually think of foundations strictly as grantmakers. Convening can be even more important than providing money. Our nonpartisan structure and long view as an institution built to last position us to lead on complex, persistent issues. We have convened housing experts to address homelessness and community representatives to build charitable funds in their local communities. We’ve gathered faith leaders to encourage social engagement and a broad cross section of the business and nonprofit areas to speak out against racism. We bring in subject matter experts, funders and advocates, map new strategies, and tackle projects too big for anyone to do alone. Our grantmaking philosophy is to be a catalyst for change. One of the best ways to do that is to bring Alaskans together, in conversation.

Sometimes we just want to learn more about our community or raise awareness. We’ve hosted Korean American community members and housing providers, former governors and philanthropy colleagues, just some among many varied backgrounds. In 2016, when the seriousness of the state budget shortfall was emerging, we met with Alaskans from Bethel to Fairbanks to Ketchikan to encourage a path to a sustainable future for our state. Three years later, the work continues. Discussions may help decision-makers down the road.

In this year’s letter to Alaska, read about some of our convenings, on homelessness, the arts, and even earthquake response. And what of Dena A Coy, that unique treatment program? It moved in 2001 to a new building funded by many and inspired by the Athabaskan story of Raven bringing light. Since the program began, more than 1,900 women and 500 children have been served. As program leaders tell us, women leave with new skills to manage the ups and downs of daily life, a renewed sense of their personal strength and restored hope that long-term recovery is possible.

It starts with coming together.
Sometimes we have an issue that we need help with. We’ll call upon experts from our community who bring different perspectives. They help us think through an idea, figure out solutions, and come up with new strategies. — Diane Kaplan, President and CEO

ENDING HOMELESSNESS
If we enlist partners, can we turn the corner? Read about a collaboration between private landlords and Catholic Social Services that helped a young couple find their first home.

RECOVERING ALASKA
We gathered leaders to engage in long-view solutions to Alaska’s alcohol crisis. Read why Judge Morgan Christen pushed the Foundation to tackle a challenge once considered too big.

STRENGTHENING THE ARTS
We brought together artists and art organizations then asked: What would most help a vibrant art culture? Alaska’s art world has never been the same.

HELPING AFTER DISASTER
We sought an efficient, coordinated response to Southcentral Alaska’s magnitude 7.1 earthquake. Read how private funders and nonprofits worked together.

ENGAGING GRANTMAKERS
One of our core principles is encouraging others to give. Read about an Alaska tour like no other, designed to connect Outside grantmakers with Alaskans to share our state’s many challenges, needs and successes.
From his tent in the woods, Peter said, it sure was hard to see that bright future adults always talk about. From the shelter, Sam said, the view wasn’t much better. Now in their first apartment, Peter and Sam have a new perspective. This young couple are among the first participants in Anchorage’s promising pilot project, Path to Independence. “It’s like training wheels for an apartment,” Sam said.

This route to a more stable life is part of the Foundation’s new multiyear Homelessness Initiative. Foundation Chairman Ed Rasmuson pressed for action. “He wouldn’t let it go,” Foundation President and CEO Diane Kaplan said. Community leaders were ready. The board in November agreed to act. First steps are being taken to house people who have been chronically homeless, provide supports, and collect data to track results. Former hospital executive Dick Mandsager serves as the Foundation’s senior fellow on homelessness. The new Anchorage Homelessness Leadership Council, co-chaired by Mayor Ethan Berkowitz and Bruce Lamoureux of Providence Health & Services Alaska, was created with Foundation help.

Already, Path to Independence, designed for those who are ready to work, offers temporary rent subsidies, help with job searches and navigation of issues through case managers and a landlord liaison. The Foundation convened philanthropic organizations and asked them to invest. The result: “more money more quickly than we ever thought possible,” said Gabe Layman, chief operating officer of Cook Inlet Housing Authority, one of two landlords already involved. The other is Weidner Apartment Homes, among 23 funders that have contributed more than $700,000 including all 12 Alaska Native regional corporations.

Peter, 20, and Sam, 19, met last year at Covenant House. “We applied for jobs but not with the same vigor as we have now because we have something to work for,” Sam said. “It felt impossible when we were on the street.”

In December, the couple moved into a Weidner apartment with a welcome basket of household supplies from Catholic Social Services, which provides case management for Path to Independence. Their share of rent started at $315 monthly. The test comes in July when they will owe the whole $900. In late spring, Sam landed a new job. After months of looking, Peter was in the process of getting one too. He couldn’t wait. From his first home of his own, he sees what’s at stake.
“Think beyond this time,” Foundation Chairman Ed Rasmuson urged more than a decade ago. Think bigger than grants for health clinics or domestic violence shelters, as vital as they are. How could we transform life in Alaska?

As a Superior Court judge in Anchorage, Morgan Christen dealt with alcohol’s destructive wake. Sexual assault. Broken families. Murder. She also was a Foundation board member, and the chairman’s message resonated. She thought about a landscape architect who designed some of the world’s greatest gardens knowing he wouldn’t be around to see them fully matured. Maybe a long-view approach would work for Alaska’s deep-rooted alcohol crisis.

“This isn’t the kind of problem that can be solved by money,” she said. “It’s much more complicated than that. I thought that’s exactly why Rasmuson had to be the one to take it on. . . . What it does better than anyone is convening people.”

For two days in June 2009, the Foundation gathered 20 Alaska leaders in Talkeetna. More convenings followed. So began Recover Alaska, an initiative to reduce the harm caused by alcohol through public health messaging, policy changes and a shift in social norms around drinking.

“Our power really lies in our connections,” said Recover Alaska executive director Tiffany Hall. Legislators, judges, public health officials, tribal leaders and nonprofit directors work together for system change. In a video series called “Day 001,” people including Hall tell of getting sober. One Alaskan watched a video, took a screening test, and got into treatment. Partnerships with news organizations have produced award-winning journalism on solutions. In rural villages, kids have rallied against bootleggers.

A concert last fall featured mocktails, Anchorage band Medium Build and the hashtag #wildlysober. Band lead vocalist Nick Carpenter said Recover Alaska shows how to live life without the mask of booze. The last day of 2017, he quit drinking. “It challenges people to have to relate on something other than their shared love of alcohol, which then provides deeper connections,” Carpenter said. His life and art are better in every way, “professionally, emotionally, mentally, physically,” he says.

Public health campaigns can alter behavior, said Christen, who is now a federal appellate judge. People used to smoke cigarettes in hospital rooms. Almost no one wore seatbelts. “It’s a generational shift,” she said of Recover Alaska’s mission. “But it can be done.”
STRENGTHENING THE ARTS

Arts revival, Alaska style

Back in the early 2000s, Alaska artists — and art organizations — were hurting. Oil prices had crashed, the pipeline boom was long over, and spending on the arts was in steep decline. Rasmuson Foundation, with a deep family history of supporting arts, wanted to invest with impact. Staff members researched leading ideas around the country. In April 2003, the Foundation gathered key people in its board room, gave them piles of play money, and asked how to spend it. Artists, gallery owners and heads of art organizations agonized as if they were deciding Alaska’s art future. In a sense, they were.

From that convening, the Foundation’s $20 million, 10-year Arts and Culture Initiative emerged. We launched programs now embedded in the Foundation’s DNA that were markedly different from familiar capital grants. Participants had lots of ideas including this recurring theme: The best way to ensure the vibrancy of the arts would be to put money directly into the hands of artists. “This was stepping out of that comfort zone to engage directly with those who provide those services,” said Ira Perman, who facilitated the arts gathering and now heads Atwood Foundation, a close partner.

The very next year, our Individual Artist Awards started as a way to recognize, reward and encourage creative excellence with three levels of awards for Alaskans. The artist awards stand out as a marquee program of the Foundation.

The initiative sought to strengthen every aspect of the arts. Newspaper headlines highlighted Foundation hopes: “Funding Creativity.” “A great revival.” “A shot in the arts.” Organizations found new support for creative work. Funding for museums to buy artwork from living Alaska artists was solidified. Grants went for artist residencies in schools and development of arts leaders. We were one of the founding funders of ArtPlace, which uses art as a path to community development, as well as United States Artists, a national organization that awards $50,000 artist fellowships. So far, 13 Alaskans have been recipients including Allison Akootchook Warden this year and Sonya Kelliher-Combs last year.

“The ripple effect of the Arts and Culture Initiative has resulted in a wealth of support for arts and culture organizations at levels that did not exist prior,” said Andrea Noble-Pelant, executive director of the Alaska State Council on the Arts. “Our Alaska groups have become stronger through innovative leadership, organizational transformation, relevant visioning and meaningful partnerships.”
The earth shuddered, ceilings crashed to floors, and a broken pipe sent water cascading through suddenly dark offices of an Eagle River nonprofit. In Anchorage, Alaska Junior Theater was poised for its biggest performance day of the year — until earthquake damage cancelled events all over town. Southcentral Alaska’s magnitude 7.1 quake on Nov. 30 hit nonprofit organizations hard. Funders confronted the disaster with quick teamwork to fill needs and soften losses. Alaska grantmakers didn’t want to miss anyone.

Rasmuson Foundation President and CEO Diane Kaplan jumped on calls with colleagues to coordinate a response. The Foraker Group, which supports nonprofits, generated an online survey of damage and loss, a roadmap to private aid. The Alaska Community Foundation activated its Alaska Disaster Recovery Fund, seeded with $185,000 from Wells Fargo. Key players met repeatedly. United Way of Anchorage guided the way. Two weeks post-quake, funders evaluated a spreadsheet of surveyed needs on a big screen: Lost revenue. Damaged buildings and equipment. Unexpected expenses, such as Camp Fire Alaska caring for students of worried parents when schools suddenly closed. In the end, 11 funders spread more than $690,000 among 49 nonprofits. More than 60 individuals and private businesses pitched in too.

Atwood Foundation, with an interest in the arts, awarded to several including $20,000 to Alaska Junior Theater for lost ticket revenue. Knight Foundation provided Koahnic Broadcast Corp. $50,000 for repairs to radio station KNBA. Mat-Su Health Foundation stepped up with awards including $44,000 to Set Free Alaska, a heavily damaged treatment center. Funders, each with their own expertise, ensured needs were met across areas: the arts, media, children’s programs, social services and health care, said Nina Kemppel, Alaska Community Foundation president and CEO. “The funders took care of the funding,” she said, “so nonprofits could concentrate on the hard work in the field, including helping people facing significant challenges due to the earthquake.”

That coordination eliminated worry and boosted morale, said Diane Poage, executive director of Eagle River’s Family Outreach Center for Understanding Special Needs, or FOCUS, which serves children and adults with disabilities. Water damage made offices unusable. Relief came through disaster grants totaling $70,000 including $40,000 from the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority for computers, storage, printers, scanners, WiFi hotspots and more. Without it: “we wouldn’t have been able to serve our families,” Poage said.

When disaster hits, Alaskans help Alaskans.
A tête à tête with a U.S. senator. Coffee with tribal leaders. Conversations with whaling captains and heads of corporations. A visit to the most diverse ZIP code in the United States, Anchorage’s Mountain View neighborhood. We connect philanthropists from the Lower 48 to the Alaska that most Alaskans never get to see. Every year since 1997, the Foundation has hosted a weeklong jam-packed tour that melds two of our guiding principles: partnership and leverage, encouraging others to give. Welcome to our Grantmakers Tour. Through it, we connect Outside grantmakers with local leaders and corporations to learn about and invest in Alaska.

We work with locals to showcase our challenges, our solutions and our vision. Partners represent varied sectors — healthcare, housing and social services; arts, culture and education. We travel by plane, boat and train to convene with Lower 48 grantmakers. We have hosted dozens of foundation leaders. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Ford Foundation and Pacific Northwest’s M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust are among those that have sent representatives multiple years. Maurine Knighton, arts program director for Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, said her experience on the 2018 tour informs her philanthropic practice. “One of the most important things that I gained was a much deeper appreciation for the people here, for the ingenuity, for the inventiveness and for the spirit.”

The tour and regular spinoffs bring results: an estimated $115 million to Alaska from alumni foundations over the years. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation recently awarded $500,000 to Alaska Public Media to support coverage of rural health care challenges. Doris Duke Charitable Foundation designated $1 million for R.O.C.K Mat-Su to promote healthy families. The tour also puts Alaska on the philanthropic map. Our isolation necessitates innovative solutions. Money alone doesn’t do it. The right people must come together at the right time. The tour stands out as one way we try to fulfill our founders’ vision of improving lives in Alaska.
INVESTING FOR IMPACT IN 2018

Grants range from senior vans to help for people experiencing homelessness

A lullaby project for incarcerated parents. Roof repairs, vans for seniors and youth, and technology upgrades. Homes for working people and public use cabins. In 2018, we awarded 450 grants. Here’s where the $31.7 million went:

$31.7 MILLION IN GRANT AWARDS AND INVESTMENTS

$30.5 MILLION GRANTS PAID OUT

Grantmaking by Region

Our 2018 awards supported local projects, organizations and artists in around 70 Alaska communities, as seen on this map.

$645 MILLION TOTAL ASSETS AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2018

$400+ MILLION TOTAL INVESTMENT IN ALASKA SINCE 1955

26 EMPLOYEES

RASMUSON FOUNDATION AT A GLANCE

Aleutian & Pribilof Islands
$570,320

Bering Strait
$1,221,928

Bricklayer
$132,000

Copper River
$17,675

Cynch
$1,031,509

Kodiak
$1,031,509

Kuskokwim
$216,502

Nimitz
$167,650

Northwest Arctic
$167,650

Pacific Northwest
$5,000

Prince William Sound
$169,414

Rasmussen
$12,500

Southcentral
$19,377,369

Statewide
$5,784,608

Total
$5,784,608

Total Investment
$400

Total Employees
26

TOTAL INVESTMENT IN ALASKA SINCE 1955

TOTAL ASSETS AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2018
### Grantmaking by Program Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Area</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing &amp; Homelessness</td>
<td>$6,711,146</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>Arts &amp; Culture</td>
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<td>Human Services</td>
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<td>Recreation, sports, other*</td>
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<td>Development of communities &amp; organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health</td>
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*$ Other includes conservation work such as fish-and-wildlife projects, as well as research.

#### $31.7 Million in Grant Awards

**Southeast**
- $1,933,330

### 450 Grants Awarded Directly in 2018

- **42 Large Grants/Tier 2**
  - Our Tier 2 grants supported projects that provided widespread benefit, were of strategic importance or were especially innovative — and sometimes all of the above.

- **197 Small Grants/Tier 1**
  - Awards of up to $25,000, known as our Tier 1 grants, went for small but essential capital needs: vans and computers, fences and floors.

- **36 Individual Artist Awards**
  - Alaska artists pursued specific projects or immersed more fully in their artistry.

- **6 Program-Related Investments**
  - Low-cost loans and other financial instruments helped projects pencil out including The Dome sports complex in Anchorage and Mill Bay Townhomes, workforce housing in Kodiak.

- **11 Philanthropic Organization Grants**
  - These awards supported focused improvement in the sector.

- **7 Sabbaticals**
  - Nonprofit and tribal leaders renewed themselves.

- **4 Initiatives**
  - These addressed systemic issues: alcohol addiction, housing and two awards related to homelessness.

- **147 Discretionary Grants**
  - These grants by board and staff benefited nonprofits from Bethel to Utqiagvik to Petersburg.

### Almost 200 Grants Awarded Through Partners

Almost 200 additional grants were made through partners with our awards. In 2018, Museums Alaska, the Alaska State Council on the Arts, The Alaska Community Foundation and Alaska Housing Finance Corp. all granted funds to others through our awards.

*See our separate grant list for all the awards made in 2018.*
Find more of our Annual Letter to Alaska on our special web feature including videos and an interactive map.