

# 20 years of making a difference

*Set up 20 years ago by the former chair of the Colchester-based confectionary group Trebor, The Essex Community Foundation has used the last two decades to distribute close to £30million to good causes in Essex. Essex Life looks back at those last 20 years*

A SPECIAL anniversary is being celebrated this year by Essex Community Foundation (ECF), a leading independent charitable trust dedicated to improving the quality of life for people in our county. In 2016, ECF reached an important milestone, its 20th anniversary, and the foundation has been holding a series of events to mark the occasion.

As well as celebrating its achievements over the past two decades, ECF is looking to the future, with plans to make an even greater impact in the county. Thousands of voluntary and community groups in Essex have been given vital support by ECF, which invests and distributes funds on behalf of a wide range of donors.

The charity uses deep-rooted local knowledge to make its grant giving as effective as it can be and, since it was founded in 1996, nearly £28 million of charitable funding has been distributed in the county to support a wide variety of voluntary organisations and projects.

Caroline Taylor, chief executive of ECF, explains: 'Our 20th anniversary is a significant milestone and, as well as celebrating the success story of the past two decades, we are also setting our sights on playing an even greater role in making life better for local people in our county.

'We will be building on our strengths and, looking forward, our approach will be strategic. We will continue to identify areas of need using our expertise and insight. Through some of our work we will be able to make an immediate difference and, through other ways of working such as partnerships with other organisations, we can facilitate long-term change in communities.

'As one of the UK's leading accredited



Ian and Angela Marks celebrate ECF's 20th anniversary at a tea party held at Pontlands Park Hotel, with Jonathan Minter, ECF's chairman, and Caroline Taylor, ECF chief executive

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community foundations, we have unique expertise and local knowledge to help individuals, families, companies and public agencies to channel their giving to where it is needed most and support the local causes and charities they care about.'

Today Essex Community Foundation continues to go from strength to strength and it is the second largest

organisation of its kind in the country.

Jonny Minter DL, chairman of ECF, added: 'Over the past 20 years we have celebrated many milestones and achievements. To date we have built an endowment fund of more than £30 million and we are delighted that so far we have been able to award 6,000 grants totalling nearly £28 million to local voluntary organisations and individuals in Essex.

'Over the past 20 years we have learned so much through our work. We have a greater understanding of the needs of our communities – through our relationship with the voluntary sector and the applications we receive, through our strategic partnerships with Essex County Council, public agencies and Essex Police, through our own research including the Vital Signs report and through the panels of local people who keep us informed of the issues that matter in the county.

'This knowledge and expertise is enabling us to work with families, individuals and local companies including e2v, Birketts, Rickard Luckin, Saffron Building Society and Sound Financial to help them support local charities and voluntary organisations. ECF has also been able to breathe new life into existing charitable trusts by bringing them under our management, ensuring that people today can benefit from trusts established a century ago, such as those set up by the Courtauld family.

'We also work in partnership with national foundations and central government to direct funding into local communities. ECF has distributed small grants to Essex charities on behalf of Comic Relief since 2009 and has also worked with the Henry Smith Charity, distributing their large grants in Essex since 2008.

'ECF has come a long way since it was first established and we in Essex will be forever grateful and thankful to our founder and president Ian Marks and his wife Angela for having the vision and determination to create an organisation which makes such a difference to the lives of people of Essex.'



**Top** Jason Bartella (front) meets with Gary Corbett, assistant vice principal at Columbus School, to see how the children are enjoying the new playground equipment which was made possible thanks to a donation from the Bartella Charitable Fund

**Above** SNAP based in Brentwood received a grant of £3,700 from the Birketts Charitable Fund

**A TOUCH OF HISTORY**

The seeds of ECF's success were first sown by Ian and Angela Marks, who live in Ingatestone. Ian was chairman of Trebor, originally a family-owned Colchester confectionery group. When Trebor was sold to Cadbury-Schweppes, Ian and Angela were determined that they should use much of the money the company's sale had brought them to help those in need. Inspired by the success of community foundations in America and the first such organisations in this country, Ian and Angela set their sights on establishing a foundation for Essex. Ian and ECF's first chief executive, Laura Warren, based in a small office in Chelmsford, set about winning hearts and minds to make the vision of a strong and sustainable community foundation for Essex become a reality. As support grew for a community foundation for Essex, money began to come in and the first grants were made. Their efforts and the support given by the people of Essex changed the landscape of local philanthropic giving forever and established a vital ongoing resource to support the work of voluntary organisations in the county. ♦



The ECF team: Catherine Burton, Fran Wright, Jo Murphy, Caroline Taylor, Steve Mackenzie, Barbara Garside and Jill Curd

For more details or to get involved, visit [www.essexcommunityfoundationorguk](http://www.essexcommunityfoundationorguk) or call 01245 355947