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# Luzerne Foundation provides grants for area non-profit groups

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Hazleton area non-profit groups may be eligible for grant funds from a foundation that oversees more than 100 endowment funds.

Charles Barber, executive director of the Luzerne Foundation, said the Foundation manages a total of \$8.5 million from over 100 programs, which a board of directors oversees.

Barber said the main purpose of the foundation is to help improve the quality of life in northeastern Pennsylvania.

"We're sort of an odd duck," Barber told members of the Mountain Council of Govern-

ments this week.

"We're the same as the COG in that our mission is to improve the quality of life, but as a charity, we are different. We help people who have an idea. We don't do programs. We make programs better. We're known by the grants we make."

One endowment the foundation manages is that of VITAL House, the Hazleton Area School District's program to teach high school students with disabilities life skills that will allow them to live independently.

Barber said the foundation is a 501(c)3 organization, which means it can not only give grants, but can

also accept donations, bequeaths from estates and set up the various kinds of funds.

By accepting contributions from donors, not all of the grants the foundation makes are in northeastern Pennsylvania – because the grants are made based on the donors' wishes.

"We work with the donors to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of charitable money," Barber said. "And we will work with people interested in improving the community. Our grants allow organizations which don't have enough resources to accomplish goals. We are not the cause; we are the cause-way."

Barber said the foundation handles scholarship funds and trusts for families who don't have the expertise to do it.

"We have a scholarship fund for a (late and former) student at (Bishop) Hafey (High School)," Barber said. "We just agreed to handle another scholarship fund of a girl who died. Her friend said she would establish a scholarship fund and then walked off with \$3,500. But the girl's uncle has agreed to make restitution and we will handle the fund."

Barber said the foundation also works with municipalities – through groups like the Civic Partnership.

"We can't make grants to

municipalities," Barber pointed out. "But we helped with the Pine Street Playground (restoration) by making a grant to the Civic Partnership, and they worked with the city. Parks like Pine Street create economic development, because they bring in new families and revitalize communities."

The foundation also makes grants to cultural projects and pursuits.

"We just made a grant to the Ferrwood Music Camp (in Drums)," he said. "We understand communities have cultural needs. Cultural pursuits are part of economic development. Arts, health, historic and landscape

preservation like the Rails-To-Trails are all economic development. Everything is intertwined."

Barber said the foundation's desire to make grants that will have a big difference.

"We don't give \$100 to everybody," he said. "We try to leverage our grants for maximum impact."

Barber said the foundation, which is 10 years old, is "living, vital and constantly growing." He also said about one-third of the foundation's grants are made in the Hazleton area.

For more information on the foundation, call Barber in Wilkes-Barre at 822-5420 or visit [www.luzernefoundation.org](http://www.luzernefoundation.org).