



2021 Richard C. and Vina L. Sauer Charitable Leadership Award **Dirk and Paige Willms**

The 2021 recipients of the Richard C. and Vina L. Sauer Charitable Leadership Award have been quietly helping fulfill needs in Henderson County since arriving here in 2000 from Chicago. A humble duo, Paige and Dirk Willms found one of the special qualities of Henderson County to be the tremendous amount of charitable organizations doing great work through collaboration. “Whatever your area of interest is, whether it’s education or dogs, or health or other things, there’s an organization here that’s trying to help. And, it’s refreshing to see that approach,” Paige said.

Never needing credit and discreetly giving of their resources and time, Dirk and Paige Willms are always willing to help when there is a need, just as Mr. and Mrs. Sauer, who are long remembered for their modesty. “I’m willing to work, but I really liked to fly under the radar. I don’t have to take a lot of credit. I don’t have to be the leader,” says Dirk. “And, if we get the job done and we can help people, that’s what I’m looking for.”

Through the years they have lent their skills and a helping hand at church and many other area organizations including Habitat for Humanity, Blue Ridge Health, and The Park at Flat Rock.

Recognizing how they have been fortunate to be able to help others, Dirk and Paige agreed that they found many opportunities to give through Community Foundation. Dirk served as a board member from 2005-2011, and it was through his service that he and Paige met other people who shared their intrinsic spirit of giving. Paige shared, “I think knowing Community Foundation helped us identify some organizations that we wouldn’t have found otherwise. And, that’s a service as far as I’m concerned. Also, the scholarship program is one of the best things that Community Foundation does. They identify phenomenal kids in this area and are able to help them.”

When asked to describe the values that underpin their quiet philanthropy, Dirk and Paige sincerely and simply replied, “You just help where there is a need.” The subtle pair was taken aback when presented with the Sauer Charitable Leadership Award. “My first reaction to that was, ‘No, I’m not worthy of it,’” mentioned Dirk. “I’m looking at the people who’ve received it. I was amazed. I don’t think we’re on that level of philanthropy and that dedication, but I’m honored,” remarked Paige. “You got us,” she chuckled.