

# Quarterly Newsletter



April 17, 2020



## Guest Comments from ECF Executive Director, Becky Jeppesen Nurnberg

Many times since the COVID-19 crisis began, I've been feeling frustrated and down. Recently as I was getting dressed to go to the office, out of my jewelry case I pulled what once was the handle of a spoon, but is now a charm for a necklace. On it, in script, is the name "Nellie." I bought the charm because my paternal grandma's name was Nellie Catherine Carnell Jeppesen and I had a special relationship with Grandma. I was the oldest granddaughter, plus we only lived a quarter of a mile away from Black Locust Farms, the dairy farm where I grew up. Grandma was known for her fried chicken and sugar cookies – actually most of her cooking, but Grandma was a character. She spoiled her grandkids and we never knew a locked door to Grandma and Grandpa's house. Many say I look like her. She had a wicked sense of humor with occasional inappropriate comments. Again, that's me. She kept an immaculate house, but somehow I didn't get that gene! We had a great childhood growing up down the road from our grandparents.

In looking at the charm with "Nellie" on it, I started thinking of Grandma's life story. She was born in 1899 to a very poor family in Ohio. They moved to Michigan in her early teens and she never finished high school because she had to work. She worked as a "servant girl" for a wealthy family who owned a hardware store. I still have a calendar she saved from that store to remind her of those times. She was 15 years old when World War I broke out and although she didn't talk much about that time, she lost friends and relatives during that conflict. It was a frightening time. She was 23 when she married my grandpa, Levi Jeppesen, on a Wednesday because "that was his lucky day." They bought a farm and 80 acres from Carl Andersen in 1923. Their first Christmas on the farm was when my Uncle Lee was 10 months old and he came down with dysentery. Families with dysentery were quarantined to their houses and neighbor Frank Wulff did Grandpa's chores. On Christmas Eve, Frank stopped at the house to see if they had enough food and Grandpa said they had eggs, flour and sugar to make pancakes. Frank hitched his team and drove 4 miles to the local store for groceries so my grandparents could have Christmas. The Wulffs were always good neighbors. My grandparents had two sons and the farm prospered, but in 1929, the Great Depression struck. Carl Andersen said if they could pay the loan principal, he would forgive the interest. They were able to make those payments and keep the farm. One day with Grandma, she laughed and told me neighbors were collecting for the poor during the Depression. Grandpa and Grandma had only twenty-five cents to get through the winter, but they gave that to the "poor" as they had meat, milk, eggs and potatoes and wouldn't go hungry. Neighbors helped each other out by "threshing" together and the host farm would furnish the meal. Grandpa was always proud that the biggest crew showed up to work with him because of Grandma's cooking. Their oldest son volunteered for the Navy when the US entered World War II and my dad stayed home with an ag deferment. I remember Grandma saying even though Uncle Lee was stateside, she was still "worried sick" about him all during the war. My grandpa lived to be 84 and Grandma to 92.



*"Hard work never hurt anybody; keep a positive attitude; finish what you start; help your neighbors; be generous even when you don't think you have it to give; be a leader in your community; and love your family." --Grandma Nellie*

I have a feeling Grandma Nellie would tell me today that the good and bad are what make up life. It's your attitude and how you react to these challenges that determine who are the strong. When I look at my "Nellie" charm, it reminds me of so many lessons from Grandma. Some of them are: hard work never hurt anybody; keep a positive attitude; finish what you start; help your neighbors; be generous even when you don't think you have it to give; be a leader in your community; and love your family. Considering the current COVID-19 crisis, Grandma Nellie's lessons still apply for our families, those we work with and our community. Oh – one other thing I got from my Grandma is her ability to make her famous sugar cookies. They are the best!

# In the Spotlight

The Emporia Community Foundation, Emporia Main Street, KVOE, and the United Way of the Flint Hills are pleased to announce the creation of the Greater Emporia Area Disaster Relief Fund. This fund will provide support for businesses and nonprofits in Lyon and the surrounding counties experiencing needs due to the COVID-19 crisis.

If you would like to make a contribution to the relief fund through your ECF fund, please contact the office.



## Second Quarter Calendar

### April

17 – ~~ECF Board Meeting/Quarterly Trustee Meeting~~  
**CANCELED**

### May

15 – **79 Fund** Grant Application Deadline  
 15 – **ECF Board Meeting**  
 20 – ~~Keep It A Safe Summer~~  
**Event CANCELED**

### June

1 – **Sadie Jones Fund** Grant Application Deadline  
 19 – **ECF Board Meeting**  
 26 – ~~ECF 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration~~ **POSTPONED**



## Investing in the Community

*This quarter, the ECF asked Chris Calmer, our UMB Bank Institutional Portfolio Manager, to provide his thoughts on the current state of the markets and our investments.*

The period ended March 31, 2020 was one of the most challenging quarters for global markets in our history. The S&P 500 declined -19.60% and international stocks sold off as well, with the Morgan Stanley Corporate EAFE index selling off -22.38% for the quarter. Fixed income did have a strong quarter led by US Government and Agency bonds, with an index return of 2.40% for this quarter. The ECF portfolio is a blend of equities and fixed income, so the return of -13.69% is consistent with what we might expect. The good news is that April has provided a pretty sharp recovery in domestic stocks, with the first full week of April being the best since 1974. Of course, we still have a long way to go to get to the market highs we saw in February.

Thankfully the Fed has decided to provide significant stimulus to the market by reducing the short-term rate to 0% and implemented some unprecedented actions by purchasing corporate bonds, both investment grade and high yield, as well as municipal fixed income securities. This has given the fixed income markets significant liquidity and some much needed relief to bond prices.

We have made a decision to not rebalance to our normal overweight to equities and an underweight to fixed income until the markets begin to stabilize. We have seen record volatility in the markets, the VIX (Volatility Index) is trading at 42, which is well above its historical average of 20. We believe it is important to continue to be patient and watch for opportunities to rebalance once we see the economy begin to start up again. This is a more conservative approach, but if the markets continue to show volatility and uncertainty, we believe this is the most prudent approach.

