



**THE 2016
KYLE & PHYLLIS ROBESON
PHILANTHROPY AWARD RECIPIENTS:**

Helen Levin, Emily Levin and the Ezra Levin Foundation



Helen's 100th birthday celebration!



KYLE & PHYLLIS ROBESON PHILANTHROPY AWARD

Kyle & Phyllis Robeson exemplify philanthropy in east central Illinois at its best. Each year the award named in their honor will be bestowed upon others whose vision, philanthropic leadership and generosity have left an indelible imprint on the region.

The mission of the Community Foundation is to be a leader and major catalyst for long-term philanthropic assistance to the residents of east central Illinois. We do that to realize our vision—raising the quality of life throughout our area.

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Ezra and Helen Levin moved to Champaign in 1940. From the beginning, the Levin family has contributed significantly to enriching the quality of life for the residents of the Champaign-Urbana community and beyond.

Ezra Levin and the Ezra Levin Foundation

Ezra Levin was a self-made man, visionary biochemist, businessman and philanthropist. In 1936, Levin's strong commitment to nutrition and good health prompted him to found VIOBIN Corporation, which continues to be a strong manufacturer of drugs, health food products, and nutritional supplements.

A man ahead of his time, Levin developed a cholesterol-free defatted egg powder long before cholesterol was of concern. He pioneered inexpensive methods for production of fish protein and wheat germ concentrate in an effort to fulfill his vision of feeding impoverished people worldwide. He developed a treatment for pancreatic insufficiencies caused by cystic fibrosis and made generous gifts for cystic fibrosis treatment.

The Ezra Levin Foundation was established in 1970 with the vision of helping educate young people and provide support to local nonprofit organizations. Helen and Ezra, until his death in 1981, demonstrated exceptional generosity to the Champaign-Urbana community and the University of Illinois. Helen has continued that generosity through Foundation distributions to many local groups focused on the arts, education, health and human services, literacy, the environment and faith. Now, daughter Emily is continuing the family tradition of investing in worthy organizations through Foundation distributions.

The Levin Women

Helen Levin's contributions to the community include her leadership and involvement in countless civic and philanthropic endeavors.

Helen was a long-time member and past president of the Champaign County League of Women Voters (LWV) and she rose to become a LWV of Illinois' board member and president. She was elected to the National LWV Board and served as its treasurer. She was also a member of the Board of Trustees of the Overseas Education Fund of the U.S., an educational affiliate of LWV. In 1976, Helen was one of 18 U.S. LWV women to visit China to study and form League policy statements regarding U.S. policy toward the People's Republic of China.



While the Community Foundation had thirteen founding fathers in 1972, Helen Levin was our only founding mother. Highly respected for her commitment to local philanthropy, Helen was the only woman named to serve on the first Community Foundation Board of Trustees. She served as a trustee until 1979 and as Vice-President from 1974 to 1978. She was elected Honorary Trustee in May, 1980.

In 1992, Helen Levin was named the very first Most Valuable Citizen by the Champaign County Chamber of Commerce.

She has served in both leadership and advisory positions in countless local, state and national organizations: Illinois Board of Higher Education, University of Illinois Foundation, Parkland College Foundation (founding board member), Illinois Department of Mental Health, National Academy of the Arts, Sinai Temple—and many more.

Helen devoted her loving attention to her three daughters—Judy, Susie and Emily. She also became a very accomplished artist in both painting and needlepoint. She has always been widely admired for her grace, strength, kindness, and compassion.

Emily Levin was born in Champaign and graduated from University High School. She earned a Master's in Education and Credential in Counseling Psychology from UC Berkeley and later attended Michigan and Illinois where she earned her Bachelor of Arts and Master's in vocal music. She has composed over 280 songs and recorded two albums.

In 1968, Emily started Transcendental Meditation and became a Teacher of TM in 1972. After completing her college degrees, she worked full time for the Transcendental Meditation Organization and currently serves on its International Administrative Board.

Emily returned to Champaign in 2004 to be with her mother and is continuing to write music. She is picking up where her mother left off—enjoying the fulfillment of administering the Ezra Levin Foundation.

Because the Levin family has reached out through their time, talent and treasure, and thereby enriched so many lives over many decades, the Community Foundation is pleased to name them the recipients of the 2016 Kyle & Phyllis Robeson Philanthropy Award.

“We need each other. Through the Community Foundation we reach out to others who need help and can join us in making a community that enriches all our lives.”

Helen Levin, Founding Mother
Community Foundation of East Central Illinois