For Immediate Release
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UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation President & CEO Receives AFP West Michigan Honor

Kelli Smith, CFRE, Recognized with Outstanding Fundraising Professional Award at National Philanthropy Day Celebration

Chelsea/Grand Rapids, MI, Nov. 10, 2026 – The UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation announced that President & CEO Kelli Smith, CFRE, received the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) West Michigan's Benjamin Franklin Award for Outstanding Fundraising Professional. Smith was honored at AFP West Michigan's 2026 National Philanthropy Day event on Thursday, November 5, held at Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park.

Since 2023, Kelli Smith has led the UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation, fundraising arm for Brio Living Services, a faith-based, nonprofit senior living organization with headquarters in Grand Rapids and Chelsea. Smith leads the Foundation's ten-person team in its fundraising initiatives, including its **Live *Life* with Brio** $28 million comprehensive campaign, to support older adults and Brio's dedicated team members.

With nearly three decades of philanthropic experience, Smith has served in leadership roles at John Ball Zoo; Saint Mary's Foundation, Mercy Health; Beaumont Health Foundation; American Heart Association; Detroit Country Day School; and University Liggett School.

Spencer Haworth, chair of AFP West Michigan's 2026 National Philanthropy Day Committee, shared, "Kelli Smith starts by listening. She takes the time to learn why someone wants to give, then helps them find a way to make a difference that feels personal to them. That's how she's earned the trust of long-time donors and brought new people into the work of caring for older adults. I'm proud to see AFP West Michigan recognize her with the Benjamin Franklin Award for Outstanding Fundraising Professional."

Catherine (Reezie) DeVet, immediate Past Chair of the UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation, agreed. "Kelli is one of the best communicators I have known. She is clear about the mission of our

organization and passionate about the vulnerable communities we serve. She is able to express her message to donors, community leaders, her team, and those older adults we serve, adjusting her approach to best match the interests and needs of the audience. Her style is interactive, seeking input and thoughtfully considering the ideas of others. Her open and honest dialogue facilitates trust and progress toward productive interactions."

Smith credits her grandmother's generous spirit for connecting her to philanthropy. "Seeing her share her resources with her neighbors and her community, drew me into a field where I could serve people," Smith said.

A dedicated professional, Smith earned her CFRE certification in 2016. She is a sought-after speaker and was chosen to present at the 2026 annual Council of Michigan Foundations conference to share the importance of philanthropy in healthy aging. She is also a member of the National Association of Charitable Gift Planners, which she has served as chair and member of its Board of Directors. Smith is a member of the West Michigan Planned Giving Group and the AFP West Michigan Chapter.

Committed to civic, professional, and community service, Smith has served the Grand Rapids Chamber's Create Great Leaders Council, is Board Secretary for the Children's Advocacy Center of Kent County, and is a past board member of the East Grand Rapids School Foundation Board of Directors.

"It is an honor and a privilege to get to do what I do," said Smith. "For me, philanthropy means love. I hope, when I'm no longer here to see it, that whatever footprint I made will bless somebody and elevate not only the organizations I served, but also inspire others to step into those shoes and carry it forward."

"Kelli Smith represents our profession at its best," Haworth added. "She listens to what matters to a donor, earns their trust over time, and helps them see what their generosity can do for someone else. She's also given her time to fellow fundraisers, both here in West Michigan and as national board chair of the Association of Charitable Gift Planners. That's what makes this recognition from her peers so fitting."



Members of the UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation team (left to right): Amy Craig, Lisa French, Rachel Webster, Kelli Smith, Karen Owen, Barb Sullivan, Haley Baker. Foundation team members not pictured include Sheri Hardcastle, Julie Nixon, Leah Tremaine, and Corey Turner.



West Michigan AFP 2026 Awardees.

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*The **UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation**, in support of Brio Living Services, is the charitable arm for the organization, with headquarters in Chelsea and Grand Rapids, Michigan. The mission of the UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation is: As faithful, philanthropic stewards and steadfast advocates for vibrant aging, we support the mission of Brio Living Services. The UMRC-Porter Hills Foundation's fundraising initiatives focus on the health and well-being of older adults, and the education and retention of our outstanding team members. These include the Foundation's cornerstone—Benevolent Care—as well as Team Member Investment, Capital Improvements, and Program Investment.*
734.433.1000 | 616.577.2297 | Foundation.UMRCPH.org

*Building on a foundation of serving older adults since 1906, **Brio Living Services**, formerly UMRC & Porter Hills, is a faith-based, nonprofit organization whose mission is: Welcoming all, partnering together, enriching lives. Its vision is: A world in which all are empowered to age well. Brio Living Services represents the second largest nonprofit senior living organization in Michigan and serves the most economically diverse population of older adults. With a tradition of exceptional quality and a commitment to cutting-edge care, Brio Living Services and its affiliates serve approximately 9,000 older adults each year, from 23 locations and service lines, across 22 counties in Michigan's lower peninsula.*
734.433.1000 | 616.949.4975 | MyBrio.org

*The **Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP)** represents more than 30,000 members in 233 chapters throughout the world, working to advance philanthropy through advocacy, research, education, and certification programs. The Association fosters development and growth of fundraising professionals and promotes high ethical standards in the fundraising profession. AFP serves our profession through a Code of Ethics, education, and advocacy programs and communication to our members and the general public.*