

# Perspectives



MINNESOTA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION  
What's your vision?

Supporting donors and communities in creating their individual approaches to philanthropy

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## Getting Back to School

MINNESOTANS HAVE ALWAYS VALUED EDUCATION, AND THE INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES AND ORGANIZATIONS WHO PARTNER WITH US ARE NO DIFFERENT. IN A 2007 SURVEY, MINNESOTA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION DONORS RANKED EDUCATION SECOND ON THE LIST OF WHAT THEY BELIEVE TO BE THE GREATEST AREAS OF COMMUNITY NEED ACROSS THE STATE. THEIR GIVING PRIORITIES BACKED UP THAT BELIEF—MORE THAN THREE-QUARTERS OF THOSE SURVEYED RANKED EDUCATION AS NUMBER ONE ON THEIR LIST OF GIVING. EVERY LEVEL OF EDUCATION HAS BEEN IMPACTED BY THEIR GENEROSITY. FROM SYSTEM-WIDE INITIATIVES LIKE WORDS WORK! TO PROGRAMS LIKE PROJECT SUCCESS TO INDIVIDUAL SCHOLARSHIPS, DONORS LIKE YOU ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE.



*A Words Work! student practices writing his name, a key indicator of literacy progress.*

## Preparing the Youngest Minnesotans to Succeed

Studies show that early literacy education is critical to closing the achievement gap, and a program called Words Work! does just that. By partnering with early childhood programs like Head Start, Words Work! supports, develops and increases oral language development, phonological awareness, print awareness, early writing and alphabet knowledge. Begun as a pilot project in 1999, this program has now grown into a proven success.

One of the main principles of Words Work! is to surround children with literacy. Lora Lambert, literacy coordinator for CAP Agency Head Start in Carver, Dakota and Scott counties, says this is one of the true distinctions of a Words Work! classroom. “There’s literacy absolutely everywhere,” she says. “There are words, books and writing all over the classroom—not just in one book area and not just relegated to one specific time during the day.”

In addition to surrounding children with literacy, Words Work! also applies three other key precepts. The program respects home language and culture, recognizing that parents are the first and lifelong teachers of their children. Words Work! also teaches the teachers by involving them in ongoing learning groups with mentors, peers and project staff. Last, the program uses assessment for continual improvement to help empower teachers to implement strategies that meet student needs.

Lora says that all of these principles add up to a powerful program. “You go in the classroom, and the students are just so busy,” she says. “They are engaged in language, writing and books, and they’re excited about it.”

That excitement translates to success. Prior to beginning the program, 39 percent of the students scored at or above average on a standardized test. After Words Work!, 86 percent scored at or above average—as compared to the national results of 77 percent.

**Words Work!**, continued on page 2

## Dear Friends,



Our educational system is a much-discussed issue in our society. We as a nation are really concerned about the quality of

education our children experience and whether they leave school with a solid foundation for success in life.

Our future workforce is sitting in first, second and third grade classrooms all over Minnesota right now—will they be ready to compete in a rapidly shifting global economy? We need to think about how we can both raise the educational bar and then help our students meet that bar. We need to offer teachers the inspiration, tools and resources to be effective.

The good news is that there are innovators all over our state who are working in partnership with Minnesota Community Foundation to solve this puzzle and prepare our students for tomorrow—some of whom you will read about in this issue.

Education is our pathway to global success, and our position in the world depends on what is happening in local communities throughout Minnesota.




Carleen K. Rhodes  
President and CEO

## Words Work!, *continued from page 1*

Begun in Ramsey County as a collaboration between the F. R. Bigelow Foundation and The Saint Paul Foundation, this early literacy project initially served just 340 Head Start children in the metro area. Three years ago, the program expanded to Carver, Dakota and Scott counties. Now, thanks to funding from the Minnesota Department of Education, 12 new Words Work! sites are being added for the 2008-2009 school year in Douglas, Goodhue, Grant, Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, Pope, Renville, Rice, Stevens, Traverse and Wabasha counties. In total, the program will now serve more than 2,700 Head Start children across the state of Minnesota—just one example of the successful impact a partnership like this can have across our state.

Mary Vanderwert, Head Start Collaboration director for Minnesota, thinks this expansion is going to be very beneficial. “This is really the start of taking Words Work! to scale,” she says. “We have seen the program’s success in the initial sites, and now we hope to replicate that same success in other parts of our state.”

To learn more about Words Work!, please visit the Community Impact section of [www.saintpaulfoundation.org](http://www.saintpaulfoundation.org). 

## Investing in Our Future

More than \$5 million was granted to educational institutions and related activities in 2007 from Minnesota Community Foundation Donor Advised Funds. Here some of our donor advisors share why giving to education is so important to them.

### Jean Rekow, Montevideo

*“Education leads to self-assurance, self-confidence and a sense of knowing one’s self. We are an education-minded family and have helped our own children achieve their goals, so it’s nice to be able to give back and help others as well.”*

### Mike Wigley, Long Lake

*“My wife and I believe that education is the cornerstone of prosperity, democracy and liberty in our country. Lately a lot of educational institutions have been innovative in their approaches to help students become contributing members of society, and we support that.”*

### Pat Lamb and Ele Hansen, Northfield

*“As former teachers, we have a strong belief in the power of education. Being educated helps to determine one’s values, lifestyle, and attitudes toward what one is willing to contribute to society. Ideally education continues throughout life.”*

## Making Dreams Come True

*I don't think I would have gone to college if it weren't for you and your staff. It was so empowering to have older people interested in what I wanted out of life instead of just telling me what I should get out of life.*

– Project SUCCESS graduate Becky L.

This was an excerpt from a letter received by the staff at Project SUCCESS, a youth development organization that serves 8,000 middle school and high school students in 11 Minneapolis and Saint Paul public schools.

There are three program components to Project SUCCESS: 1) School-based workshops help students look at their interests, strengths and desires for the future, and then assist them in setting specific goals to achieve their dreams. 2) Theater experiences afford students and their families the opportunity to attend professional plays to inspire them and help them examine the real issues they face. 3) One-on-one assistance helps students with applications for college, financial aid and/or jobs.

Donor Advisor Karla Ekdahl believes in Project SUCCESS. A board member of the organization for 11 of its 15 years, she and her husband, Peter Hutchinson, also give to Project SUCCESS through the Ekdahl Hutchinson Family Fund of Minnesota Community Foundation.

“These kids are our future,” says Karla. “The key to any successful society is preparing young people to carry it on, and Project SUCCESS does just that.” ✨



*Project SUCCESS students gain the skills they need to achieve their goals.*

## A Community Commitment to Children



*The Albert Lea Public Education Foundation helps students to fully participate in school activities, including athletics.*

In 2000, a group of citizens who were concerned about the future of the education system in their community came together and decided to create the Albert Lea Public Education Foundation. They established three Funds with Minnesota

Community Foundation to benefit children of all ages.

The Dale Danielson Band Student Endowment Fund, established in the memory of a long-time band instructor in the Albert Lea Area Schools, gives scholarships to students so they can attend band camps. The goal is to encourage students to improve their skills with their chosen instrument.

The Tiger Alumni Student Assistance Endowment Fund provides funds to make it possible for children in need to participate in school activities. This Fund has helped everyone from an elementary-aged girl rent a violin to a high school-aged boy purchase appropriate gym shoes.

The Tiger Scholastic Achievement Endowment Fund has established a program in the middle and high schools for students who are not achieving grade-level results in their school work. The students and parents partner with teachers to succeed in fulfilling their potential and meeting specific academic goals.

Ralph Olson, chairman of the board of directors for the Albert Lea Public Education Foundation, believes there are many benefits provided by this organization. “A lot of people want to do philanthropic work on behalf of their own community but aren’t sure how to do that meaningfully,” says Ralph. “The foundation acts as a doorway for citizens to get involved.”

Most importantly, these Funds benefit students directly. “These dollars are helping kids who are academically or financially challenged so they can be more involved in school activities,” says Ralph, “and so education is a better experience for them.” ✨

# Helping Students Achieve Their Educational Goals

One of the ways Minnesota Community Foundation donors help individual students further their education is through Scholarship Funds. Two of the newest Funds include gifts originating from opposite corners of the state.

## The Dietrich Dozen

Because Corinne “Connie” Dietrich and her husband, Bill, shared a passion for lifelong learning, she left a bequest that created a variety of Scholarship Funds for students across Minnesota.

In 2008, its first full year of impact, these Funds gave out 12 scholarships. In addition to the two scholarships given to the top-ranked student at Maple River High School and LeSueur-Henderson High School, the remaining ten scholarships were competitive. These competitive scholarships were awarded to students across the state from communities like Brooklyn Park, Farmington, Red Wing and Shakopee.

Since 2007, these Scholarship Funds have awarded \$310,000, helping 14 students achieve their educational goals.

## The Marvin Warroad Scholarships

Beginning in 2007, William “Bill” and Margaret Marvin decided to express their love for both the value of education and for their community of Warroad by establishing the William S. and Margaret W. Marvin Warroad Scholarship Fund of Minnesota Community Foundation.

Awarded annually, the scholarships (which pay actual tuition and fees up to \$11,000 per year) are available to applicants graduating from Warroad High School and planning to attend an accredited two- or four-year post-secondary institution. So far, 59 students have been awarded approximately \$1,545,400 from the Fund.

One of these scholarships will help Katie Ganyo achieve her educational goals. The 2008 Warroad graduate is set to attend Northland Community College in East Grand Forks and major in early childhood development.

“This scholarship has meant so much to me and my family,” says Katie. “I have a brother and sister who are going to college, and I have watched them struggle to work and still have to borrow money to pay for school. My parents have been trying to help them, and I see the stress this has put on them. Receiving this scholarship has been a blessing.”

Katie plans to either become a preschool teacher or continue her education to become an elementary school teacher. ✨



Katie Ganyo

## The Foundation congratulates:

- Donna Dalton on her promotion to senior donor relations officer
- Sarah Richter on her promotion to development associate
- Bridget Rosario-Vega on her promotion to administrative assistant, strategy and knowledge management
- Jaclyn Schroeder on her promotion to director of gift planning

## The Foundation welcomes:

- Vanessa Barto, donor services assistant
- Rick Cook, information technology technician
- Lu Ann Finnegan, controller
- Jennifer Ford Reedy, vice president of strategy and knowledge management
- Colin Gordon, assistant general accountant
- Julie Savane, executive assistant to the president and CEO

## Perspectives

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