

# taking THE INITIATIVE

News from Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation

525 Florence Avenue | Owatonna, MN 55060 | 507.455.3215  
[www.smifoundation.org](http://www.smifoundation.org)

April 2016

## Message from Tim Penny



Two months after the February 3 fire that destroyed eight businesses on Madelia's main street, the town – and business owners – are regaining their footing. As Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (SMIF) has done in past disasters, we set up a Disaster Recovery Fund. This fund raised over \$230,000 from more than 250 donors in about a month. So far, nearly \$80,000 of that has been disbursed to business owners and a large portion will be allocated to the

City of Madelia to help with rebuilding efforts.

"If it hadn't been for the assistance from Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation's Disaster Recovery Fund, we would have had to close our doors for good," Nancy Vee, owner of EZ Medical Wraps in Madelia, told me at her grand opening on April 1. She and her sister, along with all of the other business owners, have found a space to reopen.

We are happy to have Region Nine Development Commission as a partner in the disaster recovery process. They were quick to respond and have acted quickly and competently to assist Madelia and the business owners in starting to put together a comprehensive plan for moving forward.

As with the floods in Rushford in 2007 and the floods and tornadoes affecting southern Minnesota communities in 2010, the Madelia fire was a hard loss for a community the size of Madelia. As in those instances, the generosity and strong community spirit of our rural towns shines through.

**Visit [www.smifoundation.org](http://www.smifoundation.org) to read my February op-ed on the Madelia Fire and to see the full update as of April 1.**

## Program Spotlight

Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (SMIF) received a second grant for \$60,000 from the Otto Bremer Trust to further our Early Childhood Dental Network (ECDN) initiative. It's estimated 17 million U.S. American children don't receive dental care on an annual basis, making dental care the most common unmet health need of children in the nation.

"Tooth decay is not only one of the most prevalent issues in children's health, it's also one of the most easily preventable," said SMIF's Vice President of Early Childhood Rae Jean Hansen. "However, if left untreated, it can lead to a lifetime of health problems. The goal of ECDN is to increase awareness around the rising childhood oral health issue and to utilize our Early Childhood Initiative groups to work on solutions."

SMIF received its first grant from Otto Bremer Trust in 2015 to begin a pilot program in Brown and Rice counties. The second grant will be used to begin implementation of the planning process in these two counties and to start planning in Blue Earth, Martin and Nicollet counties.

Common issues around kids' oral health already identified include a lack of dental insurance, especially among low-income families; lack of knowledge about the importance of early childhood dental care amongst parents and caregivers; a lack of dental providers willing to see very young children; and a lack of access to dental providers, especially those who take Medicaid and county-based insurance plans.

**For more information about SMIF's Early Childhood Dental Network, contact Rae Jean Hansen at 507-455-3215 or [RaeJeanH@smifoundation.org](mailto:RaeJeanH@smifoundation.org).**



Brown County Public Health "tooth fairy" educating kids on good oral health

## P2P Learning: Peer Councils

Being a small business owner can be isolating. The responsibility for making and marketing your product, handling customer relations, and getting it to the consumer is all on you. To help southern Minnesota entrepreneurs, SMIF started offering Peer Councils about ten years ago as a form of peer-to-peer networking for small business owners.

As an outgrowth of SMIF's FEAST Local Foods Advisory Network, we launched a new Peer Council in January 2016 specifically for local foods businesses. Twelve business owners meet monthly to honestly and confidentially discuss issues that matter to their businesses. Greg Thomas, formerly of Enterprise MN, facilitates the group.

Part of the reward to SMIF, besides helping to strengthen the local business economy: our lunchroom table is usually

graced with leftover local delicacies, from chocolates to freshly roasted coffee!

**If you would like to learn more about SMIF's Local Foods Peer Council, contact John Katz at [johnk@smifoundation.org](mailto:johnk@smifoundation.org).**



**REMINDER:** We are now offering an electronic version of this newsletter. We'll continue to send you a hard copy, but also expect to receive an email version with even more updates on SMIF happenings. Please let us know if you prefer to only receive this electronically going forward, or follow the simple "unsubscribe" process when you receive the electronic version if you prefer to only receive the print edition.

January 1, 2016–March 31, 2016

## Capstone Club (\$50,000+)

\*Blandin Foundation, Grand Rapids  
\*Downs Food Group, Mankato  
\*Otto Bremer Trust, Saint Paul

## Keystone (\$25,000- \$49,999)

\*L & N Andreas Foundation, Mankato  
\*MN Department of Agriculture, Saint Paul

## Cornerstone (\$10,000- \$24,999)

\*AgStar Financial Services ACA  
City of Mankato  
\*Mayo Clinic, Rochester  
\*Medica Foundation, Minneapolis  
Olmsted County  
\*Pioneer Bank – Elmore, Lewisville, Madelia,  
Mapleton, North Mankato, Mankato,  
Saint James  
City of Rochester  
\*Rosen's Diversified Inc., Fairmont  
\*Wells Fargo Bank, Minneapolis

## Champion (\$5,000- \$9,999)

Austin Port Authority  
Blue Earth County  
Faribault Economic Development Authority  
\*NuWay Cooperative, Trimont  
City of Owatonna

## Leader (\$1,000-\$4,999)

Acentek, Houston  
Associated Bank – Red Wing, Rochester  
\*Brian Bowers, Prior Lake  
City of Chatfield  
City of Eagle Lake  
Fillmore County  
\*Wayne and Connie Finnen, Okoboji, IA  
Firmenich Inc., New Ulm  
Frandsen Bank & Trust – Dundas,  
Mankato, Minnesota Lake, Montgomery,  
New Ulm, North Mankato, Waterville  
\*Initiative Foundation, Little Falls  
\*Louise Knickrehm, Saint James  
City of Lake Crystal  
\*Bill and Jan Larson, Knoxville, TN  
City of Le Sueur  
\*Madelia Optometric Inc.  
Mankato Screw Products Inc.  
Martin County  
Merchants Bank – Caledonia, Cannon  
Falls, Lanesboro, La Crescent, Red Wing,  
Rochester, Rushford, Saint Charles,  
Spring Grove, Winona  
Mower County  
\*New Ulm Chamber of Commerce  
City of New Ulm  
Nicollet County  
\*Northwest MN Foundation, Bemidji  
\*Tim and Sandy Penny, Owatonna  
People's Energy Cooperative, Oronoco  
Pine Island Economic Development  
Authority  
Rice County  
Root River State Bank, Chatfield  
City of Rushford  
City of Saint Peter

Sleepy Eye Economic Development  
Authority  
\*Southwest Initiative Foundation,  
Hutchinson  
City of Spring Valley  
\*Trinity Lutheran Church, Truman  
United Prairie Bank – Mankato, New Ulm  
Owatonna, Waseca  
Wabasha County  
Wells Concrete, Wells  
\*West Central Initiative, Fergus Falls  
Zumbrota Economic Development  
Authority

## Partner (\$500-\$999)

Accentra Credit Union – Albert Lea, Austin  
City of Arlington  
Jan and Lynda Bentdahl, Mankato  
Community Resource Bank – Cannon Falls,  
Northfield  
\*Crossroads Church, Saint James  
Edwards Manufacturing Company,  
Albert Lea  
\*Financial Recovery Services, Minneapolis  
First Farmers & Merchants Bank –  
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Le Sueur, Red Wing, White Rock  
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\*Pam Kottke, Buffalo Lake  
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\*Pat McCabe, Rochester  
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Nicollet

\*Landy and Virginia Ray, Klamath Falls, OR  
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Lake, Owatonna, Saint James,  
Saint Peter, Wells  
\*Megan Wildemuth, Geneseo, IL  
City of Winthrop

## Contributor

Albert Lea Select Foods  
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\*Jennifer Nelson, Dundas  
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\*People First, Martin County  
\*Alan and Theresa Peterson, Saint James  
\*Dr. Tim and Nancy Pinke, Saint James  
Irvin and Maureen Plitzuweit, Eyota  
Brett Reese, Northfield  
\*June Reineke, Winona

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\*RevolutionEHR, Glen Ellyn, IL  
\*Edwin Rundell, Saint Peter  
\*Juri Sanoska, Germany  
\*Todd and Mary Schwanke, Owatonna  
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\*Tammy and Warren Stevens, Saint James  
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\*Bob Wallace, Fairmont  
\*Daniel Wiechert, Lake Crystal  
\*Steve and Dawn Witcraft, Saint James

## \*PROGRAM DONORS

To make a donation, visit  
[www.smifoundation.org](http://www.smifoundation.org).

## Recent Activity

### Grants

**Reading Oasis Rooms:** \$7,500 to three communities

**Madelia Disaster Recovery Grants:** \$80,000  
disbursed to seven businesses

### Loans

**Bio Wood Processing,** Faribault | Divert wood from landfills by converting to mulch & animal bedding

**Brand Yourself,** Northfield | Brand & marketing consulting firm

**Chris Gack Agency,** Blue Earth | Farm insurance firm

**Matson Design,** Waseca | Metal fabrication, welding, & motorcycle fabrication/painting

For more information about these grants, loans, and equity investments, visit [www.smifoundation.org](http://www.smifoundation.org).

## Where we'll be (and hope to see you!):

### April 19 & May 3

Quality Child Care Program training, Pine Island

### April 20 & May 18

SCORE Chapter Meeting, Owatonna (4/20), Waseca (5/18)

### April 21

Early Childhood Initiative meeting, New Prague

### April 22 & May 20

AmeriCorps LEAP member meetings

### April 25 & May 2

Quality Child Care Program training, Faribault

Visit [www.smifoundation.org](http://www.smifoundation.org) for full event calendar.

### April 26

Child Care: A Key to Rural Economic Development, Owatonna

### April 26

Red Wing Ignite Cup: Start-up Competition

### May 5

TEDx Zumbro River, Rochester

### May 26

Environmental Initiative Awards, Minneapolis



Celebrating **30 years** of community investments

525 Florence Avenue | PO Box 695 | Owatonna, MN 55060

- **Madelia Rebounding from February Fire**
- **Early Childhood Dental Network to expand**
- **SMIF's new Peer Council helps local foods businesses**

Read More Inside!