

taking THE INITIATIVE

News from Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation

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www.smifoundation.org

February 2016

Message from Tim Penny



This year marks the 30th Anniversary not only of Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (SMIF), but of our five sister foundations, as well. The McKnight Foundation created the six Minnesota Initiative Foundations in 1986, when Minnesota was at the height of the farm crisis, to help revitalize our rural economies.

After three decades and a total of \$285 million investment from The McKnight Foundation to the six foundations, we have collectively leveraged an additional \$270 million in investments from other foundations, corporations, government, and individuals. These investments have helped diversify our rural economies beyond agriculture and manufacturing to areas such as biosciences, renewable energy, tourism, and additional social services. Millions of dollars and hours of technical assistance have gone to strengthening early childhood development efforts.

Part of going forward is learning from the past; throughout the year, we'll be interviewing past stakeholders and those impacted by SMIF's works – former presidents, Board members, loan clients, grantees, and partners. I encourage you to learn how much southern Minnesota has been transformed by the hard work of many in the past three decades by following our 30 Voices for 30 Years story board, which will be updated monthly on SMIF's website.

To read a full history of the unique Minnesota Initiative Foundation model and the work we've accomplished, see the Initiative Foundation's (Little Falls) IQ Magazine cover story, 30 Years Strong: A Model for Moving Forward.

Program Spotlight

In December, SMIF launched The Prosperity Initiative to promote minority-owned business growth in southern Minnesota. This program is funded in part by Minnesota's Department of Employment and Economic Development. Over the next two years, SMIF will work with key program partners to identify and speak with minority business owners interested in growing their companies in southern Minnesota.

The Prosperity Initiative will also work with partners to provide resources to minority-business owners to better help them overcome the frequent barriers they encounter. In doing so, the program hopes to strengthen and coordinate the resources available to minority-owned businesses throughout the region. The first phase of the program involved a survey of existing minority businesses, which will inform SMIF and its partners of the immediate and long-term needs of minority-owned businesses. As a result, conferences, trainings, and mentorships for selected companies will be available to address the identified needs. The first conference is planned for March 4.

"We know our region is facing a labor shortage," said SMIF Vice President of Economic Development Pam Bishop. "A key factor in sustaining a strong economy in southern Minnesota is making sure all business owners are getting the necessary support to grow and encouraging aspiring entrepreneurs from diverse, underrepresented backgrounds."

For more information about The Prosperity Initiative, contact Meg Steuer at 608.397.0079 or MegS@smifoundation.org.



Grantee Spotlight

One of SMIF's recent One Big Thing grant recipients was SE MN Together. This group emerged out of a 2014-2015 Regional Community Growth Initiative convening, when a group of regional leaders were tasked with brainstorming solutions of how to help the smaller communities surrounding Rochester leverage some of the momentum behind the growing Destination Medical Center.

Over the past several months, SE MN Together has brought over 330 people at three regional meetings to discuss the forecasted workforce shortage. "To attract workers, we need both thriving small towns and a growth-focused metro," said Natalie Siderius, Economic Development & Sustainability Director of Winona County, one of the group's organizers. "This means working together to make sure we can all be winners, not just those communities

with resources." SE MN Together will release preliminary findings from the three regional conversations on February 25 in Stewartville; any interested residents are encouraged to attend.

If you would like to learn more about SE MN Together, visit www.semntogether.org or email semntogether@gmail.com.



NEW: 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.

Capstone Club (\$50,000+)

*Otto Bremer Trust, Saint Paul

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

*U.S. Bank - Albert Lea, Amboy, Austin, Blooming Prairie, Fairmont, Mankato, New Prague, Owatonna, Rochester
Minnesota Elevator Inc., Mankato
Hormel Foods Corporation, Austin
Home Federal Savings Bank - Albert Lea, Austin, Kasson, La Crescent, Rochester, Spring Valley, Winona

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

Abdo Eick & Meyers LLP, Mankato
*F & M Community Bank - Chatfield, Preston, Rochester
Faribault County Development Corporation
Faribault Foods Incorporated
Firmenich Incorporated, New Ulm
First National Bank, Waseca
First State Bank of Wabasha
Freeborn County
*Barbara Henschel, Rochester
ICAN, Waseca
ISG, Mankato
*Brad and Beth Krehbiel, Lake City
Merchants Bank - Caledonia, Cannon Falls, La Crescent, Lanesboro, Red Wing, Rushford, St. Charles, Spring Grove, Winona

*Olmsted County
*Tim and Sandy Penny, Owatonna
Peoples State Bank of Plainview
Pioneer Bank - Elmore, Lewisville, Madelia, Mapleton, Mankato, North Mankato, Saint James
*Seneca Foods Corporation, Rochester
Tri-County Electric Cooperative, Rushford
Waseca County
City of Waseca
Winona County

Partner (\$500-\$999)

BENCO Electric, Mankato
*Mike and Cathy Brennan, Mankato
CliftonLarsonAllen LLP - Albert Lea, Austin, Mankato, New Ulm, Owatonna, Rochester, Waseca
First Southeast Bank - Canton, Harmony
*Freeborn Mower Cooperative Services, Albert Lea
Michael and Katherine Harte, Brownsdale
Leigh Johnson, Rochester
*Kalona Organics, Kalona, IA
*Sue Kolling, Spring Valley
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*MN Cup, Minneapolis
*Morgan Stanley, Rochester
Odin State Bank

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City of Preston
Vernon Schaefer, Adams
State Bank of Faribault
Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric, Owatonna
Stinson Leonard Street, Mankato
Weis Builders Incorporated, Rochester

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1st United Bank, Faribault
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*Diane Wilson, Owatonna
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Erica Zweifel, Northfield

*PROGRAM DONORS

To make a donation, visit www.smifoundation.org.

Recent Activity

Grants

Incentive Grants: \$42,625 to three programs

Home Visiting Grants: \$58,625 to five programs

Opportunity Grant: \$40,000 over two years to Southern Minnesota SMART Pre-K Alliance

Loans

Farmhouse Market, New Prague

Max's Main Street Hardware, Madison Lake

Michelle's Munchkins Daycare, Byron

Minnesota Valley Transport, New Ulm

MKT Glass Aggregate, Meriden

Equity Investments

GoRout, Rochester

For more information about these grants, loans, and equity investments, visit www.smifoundation.org.

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

February 8:

Quality Child Care Program training, New Prague

February 10-11:

AmeriCorps LEAP Mid-Year Retreat, Spring Valley

February 17 & March 16:

SCORE Chapter Meeting, Owatonna

February 23:

Quality Child Care Program training, Rochester

February 25:

SE MN Together Community Feedback Review, Stewartville

February 25:

Early Childhood Initiative meeting, New Prague

March 4:

The Prosperity Initiative Conference, Rochester

March 7:

MIF ECI Central Coordination Meeting, Minneapolis

March 14:

Quality Child Care Program training, Northfield

March 17:

MCF, Start Early Learning & Research meeting, Minneapolis

Visit www.smifoundation.org for full event calendar.

- SMIF is turning 30!
- The Prosperity Initiative launches to help minority-owned businesses
- SE MN Together convenes +330 to address workforce shortage

Read More Inside!

 Southern Minnesota
INITIATIVE FOUNDATION

Celebrating 30 years of community investments