The Initiative Foundation strives to provide cradle-to-career support for economic and community development, and to inspire philanthropy throughout the region.

“The organizations we support are doing great work in their respective communities. Together, with many partners, these efforts are helping to advance our mission of empowering people to build thriving communities and a vibrant region across Central Minnesota.”

Matt Varilek,
Initiative Foundation President
Dear Friends,

As a community foundation dedicated to improving the economic and social wellbeing of the region, the Initiative Foundation is focused on metrics that matter—measures that show we’re making progress in our efforts to lift people up and close opportunity gaps.

The payback comes when we move the needle to help entrepreneurs and startups; improve the economic well-being of disadvantaged people; help children prepare for kindergarten and beyond; and inspire the next generation of leaders.

With your support and generosity, 2017 was filled with purpose and promise.

• Through business financing and economic development initiatives, the Foundation provided 27 loans valued at $2.62 million. The effort leveraged $44.7 million from private sources and contributed to the creation of 89 jobs and the retention of 393 jobs.

• Through grants, scholarships and fellowships, the Foundation invested more than $1.7 million into the region. These investments cover an array of efforts—from supporting regional literacy projects to fortifying food shelves to helping people move from nonskilled to skilled work. Another $1.7 million went for statewide aquatic invasive species projects—a special effort undertaken by the Foundation at the request of the Minnesota Legislature to ensure that our lakes and rivers remain healthy.

• Through programs and outreach efforts, the Foundation invested $1.3 million to support early childhood and community development initiatives, to place Volunteers in Service to America with local units of government and nonprofits, and to provide leadership training and education to nonprofit executives so they can maximize their work.

These are just a couple of snapshots of our work in the region. And with your backing and support, we’re prepared to continue in our efforts to create opportunity so that, together, we’re working with regional and state partners to close gaps and increase the economic and social well-being of our region. A sincere thank-you from all of us to all of you for making this important work possible.

JOHN E. BABCOCK
Little School, Big Results.
How the Initiative Foundation-hosted Cuyuna Lakes Education Foundation has helped Crosby-Ironton schools become a leader in STEM education.

By Elizabeth Foy Larsen

On any given day at Cuyuna Range Elementary School (CRES) in Crosby, Minn., you’ll see busy kids engaged in hands-on physics and technology lessons. Kindergarteners gather around a blue magnetic wall that’s tricked out with miniature marble ramps, testing which angles allow the marbles to stay on their tracks. Older students write code for Arduino boards—microcontrollers that you can program to do anything from operate a robot to switch on a light. Some fabricate rockets using a new 3-D printer. Others create code for virtual reality characters, which they bring to life using smartphones.

When it comes to STEM education—that’s short for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math—Cuyuna Lakes Elementary School is a leader in Minnesota, having recently won the inaugural 2018 STEM Innovation Award from the Minnesota Elementary School Principals’ Association in partnership with the Science Museum of Minnesota. Principal Kurt Becker and technology teacher Allison Larsen also were presenters at the 2017 International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) conference.

The school’s ability to take on such innovative projects has been greatly enhanced by the Cuyuna Lakes Education Foundation (CLEF), a community-based nonprofit that provides students in the Crosby-Ironton Schools with opportunities beyond the core curriculum. One of nearly 100 Partner Funds hosted and facilitated by the Initiative Foundation, CLEF currently has a $155,000 endowed fund and makes grants of about $15,000 each year.

“Our mission is to give kids opportunities that aren’t normally available through the school,” said Clark Marshall, a member of CLEF’s volunteer board who grew up in the area and moved back after he retired from a career in information systems. “We partner with the school. We want to light the fire for kids to see new interests.”
CLEF has helped to expand STEM to STEAM by funding arts opportunities, including visits to the Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis to see plays students have studied in class. In 2016, a group of students from Crosby-Ironton High School visited Ecuador as part of a service-learning experience that was paid for in part by a grant from CLEF. The foundation has also become a vital supporter of science and technology initiatives by purchasing project materials—including the elementary school’s magnetic wall, Arduino boards, smartphones and a 3-D printer.

“STEAM is important because the idea behind the program is to give students the skills they need in the real world,” Becker said. “Critical thinking, collaboration skills, problem solving strategies—all these soft skills are crucial to their futures. We are preparing students for a future that we don’t know what it will look like, and without CLEF’s generosity we wouldn’t be able to do that.”

Three years ago, Becker sat down with teacher Allison Larsen to brainstorm ways their school could lead the way with technology education. They created a program where Larsen meets with students three days of every nine-day cycle—the same amount as music and physical education teachers. The lessons are collaborative, not to mention very fun.

“The kids love the program because they see it’s real and cutting edge,” said Larsen. “There are so many things that could turn into a niche interest that they can pursue. Parents love the program because they haven’t been exposed to these technologies and know their kids are learning skills that are important for their futures.

Marshall says CLEF’s contributions to Crosby-Ironton schools wouldn’t have been possible if it wasn’t for the services provided to CLEF by the Initiative Foundation, which has been administering the fund since 2011. “It makes more sense to have someone else do that” he said, referring to the investment support, organizational guidance and record keeping services that are provided by the Foundation. “That lets us focus on our mission. Being able to see what we are doing and have an impact on kids is really special.”

That impact is what drives not just CLEF but also Becker and Larsen. “Ideally, I’d like to see our students graduate, go off, and come back and use the skills they have to create businesses and industry in Crosby,” said Becker. “Because of this program, we will have students who are able to do that.”

In the meantime, Becker and Larsen are spreading the word about their STEAM program in the hope that other school districts across the country can build on their success.

“I would love to see Central Minnesota become the mecca of STEM and STEAM education,” said Becker. “We want people to know we are open to them coming and stealing every idea we have had because we know what we are doing for kids is what will help them be successful in life.”

“Critical thinking, collaboration skills, problem solving strategies—all these soft skills are crucial to their futures. We are preparing students for a future that we don’t know what it will look like, and without CLEF’s generosity we wouldn’t be able to do that.”
Our approach is steeped in the knowledge that economy, community and philanthropy are intertwined. Working with our partners we:

- Provide loans to businesses that create quality jobs
- Award grants to nonprofits, local governments and schools
- Help generous people give back to their communities
- Fortify the capacity of Central Minnesota communities and organizations through an array of training and programming.
Endowment Value
$52.2 Million

Total Assets
$74 Million

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, BUSINESS FINANCING, INVESTMENTS
Inspire Local Ownership, Quality Jobs

Investment Total:
$3,500,507

- Healthy Lakes & Rivers* $1,736,140 | 50%
- Initiators Fellowship/Enterprise Academy/Technical Assistance $1,067,304 | 30%
- Housing $500,000 | 14%
- Initiators Fellowship $1,312,189 | 38%
- Early Childhood/Enterprise $1,067,304 | 30%
- Manufacturing/Construction $182,000 | 5%
- Economic Development $79,850 | 2%
- Tourism $249,014 | 8%
- Retail/Wholesale $190,000 | 5%
- Thriving Communities Initiative $97,895 | 4%
- Healthy Lakes & Rivers $1,736,140 | 50%
- Early Childhood/Dental Network $125,000 | 4%
- Organizations, Development $122,870 | 4%
- Economic Development $79,850 | 2%
- Volunteers in Service to America $278,168 | 8%
- Nonprofit Organizational Development $215,520 | 6%

GRANTS, SCHOLARSHIPS & FELLOWSHIPS
Empower People

Investment Total:
$3,466,529

- Healthy Lakes & Rivers* $1,736,140 | 50%
- Partner Funds $846,043 | 24%
- Innovation Fund $240,756 | 7%
- Scholarships & Fellowships $217,975 | 6%
- Early Childhood/Enterprise $1,067,304 | 30%
- Thriving Communities Initiative $97,895 | 4%
- Economic Development $79,850 | 2%
- Volunteers in Service to America $278,168 | 8%
- Nonprofit Organizational Development $215,520 | 6%

PROGRAMS
Create Thriving Communities

Investment Total:
$1,326,307

- Thriving Communities/Early Childhood $547,287 | 41%
- Partner Funds/Special Projects $285,332 | 22%
- Early Childhood/Enterprise $1,067,304 | 30%
- Economic Development $79,850 | 6%
- Nonprofit Organizational Development $215,520 | 16%

*Includes unrealized gains on investments of $6.16 million.

A complete audit report prepared by Schlenner Wenner & Co. is available upon request. For a summary of the Initiative Foundation’s impact on the region since inception, visit ifound.org/about-us/annual-reports.

*Grants skewed higher in 2017 due to the Foundation’s role in administering a statewide aquatic invasive species initiative. Learn more at ifound.org/community/aquatic-invasive-species.
The Foundation’s financial position is strong. The organization’s general endowment assets surpassed $50 million in 2017 while the lending portfolio neared $15 million. During the past five years, net assets have grown from $50.3 million to $66.6 million.

### ASSETS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash and Cash Equivalents</td>
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<td>Restricted Cash</td>
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<td>Grants Receivable</td>
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<td>Loans Receivable, Net of Allowance for Loan Losses</td>
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<td>Other Receivables</td>
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<td>Other Assets – Charitable Gift Annuities</td>
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<td>Property and Equipment, Net</td>
<td>1,801,542</td>
<td>1,899,798</td>
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#### Total Assets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>2017</th>
<th>2016</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$74,000,813</td>
<td>$63,067,239</td>
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</table>

### LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

#### LIABILITIES

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<tr>
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<th>2017</th>
<th>2016</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounts Payable</td>
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<td>Accrued Interest Payable</td>
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<td>Accrued Expense</td>
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<td>Annuities Payable</td>
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<td>Loan Guarantee Liability</td>
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<td>Refundable Advance - Affiliated Funds</td>
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<td>Rural Economic and Community Development Loan Payable</td>
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<td>Note Payable</td>
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#### Total Liabilities

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#### NET ASSETS

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<tr>
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<th>2016</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Board Designated for Endowment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Unrestricted</td>
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#### Total Unrestricted

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#### Temporarily Restricted

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#### Permanently Restricted

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21,235,697</td>
<td>20,646,558</td>
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#### Total Net Assets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2016</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>66,560,368</td>
<td>59,079,332</td>
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</table>

### TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$74,000,813</td>
<td>$63,067,239</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A fully audited financial statement has been compiled by Schlenker Wenner & Co. and is available upon request.
The Initiative Foundation ended 2017 at 121 percent of budget for total sources of funds and 102 percent for total uses of funds. Investment returns were strong (16%). The Initiative Foundation continues to seek grant funding resources from a variety of public and private entities to support programs and operations.

## REVENUES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unrestricted</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>McKnight Foundation</td>
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<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$1,003,651</td>
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<tr>
<td>Governmental Grants</td>
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<td>Contributions and Grants</td>
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<td>Revolving Loan Interest</td>
<td>571,930</td>
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<td>571,930</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fee for Service, IQ Advertising and Other Income</td>
<td>137,091</td>
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<td>137,091</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-Kind Gifts</td>
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<td>1,987</td>
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<td>3,793</td>
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<td>Investment Income</td>
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<td>312,110</td>
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<td>1,782,323</td>
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<td>Unrealized Gain on Investments</td>
<td>4,998,806</td>
<td>1,165,789</td>
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<td>6,164,395</td>
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<td>Gain on Sale of Assets</td>
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<td>Special Events and Workshop Registrations</td>
<td>5,478</td>
<td>98,381</td>
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<td>103,859</td>
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<td>Net Assets Released from Restriction</td>
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<td>(1,229,197)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Revenues</strong></td>
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<td><strong>3,106,788</strong></td>
<td><strong>589,139</strong></td>
<td><strong>14,743,544</strong></td>
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## EXPENSES

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<td>833,024</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership and Community Development</td>
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<td>3,366,638</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic Development</td>
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<td>Fund Development</td>
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<td>Communications and IQ Magazine</td>
<td>505,155</td>
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<td>505,155</td>
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<tr>
<td>Endowment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business Loan Funds</td>
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<td>452,335</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partner Funds</td>
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<td>1,226,348</td>
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<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
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<td><strong>7,262,508</strong></td>
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## CHANGE IN NET ASSETS

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Unrestricted</th>
<th>Temporarily Restricted</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change in Net Assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,785,109</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,106,788</strong></td>
<td><strong>589,139</strong></td>
<td><strong>7,481,036</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Net Assets - Beginning of Year</strong></td>
<td><strong>32,690,026</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,742,748</strong></td>
<td><strong>20,646,558</strong></td>
<td><strong>59,079,332</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net Assets - End of Year</strong></td>
<td><strong>$36,475,135</strong></td>
<td><strong>$8,849,536</strong></td>
<td><strong>$21,235,697</strong></td>
<td><strong>$66,560,368</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## NET ASSETS

(Totals stated in millions)

Net assets have grown from $50.3 million in 2012 to $66.6 million as of Dec. 31, 2017, representing a 32 percent increase.
OUR SUPPORTERS

Initiative Foundation Program & Endowment Contributors 2017

Your support of the Initiative Foundation’s endowment fund is the financial backbone of our long-term success. The endowment provides resources each year for staff to work with local leaders to encourage economic development, help businesses get started or expand, provide workforce and leadership skills and build early childhood programs to help communities thrive.

President $50,000+
Anonymous Donor
Bush Foundation
Corporation for National & Community Service
Minnesota Department of Employment & Economic Development
Delta Dental
Funders Network for Smart Growth & Livable Communities
Granite Equity Partners, LLC
Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council
McKnight Foundation
Propel Nonprofits
Sourcewell
(formerly National Joint Powers Alliance)
Otto Bremer Foundation
USB Credit Union Development
Wells Fargo Community Development Corporation
Youthprise

Executive $30,000+
CLA Foundation

Leader $15,000+
Cass County
Mardag Foundation
Rockefeller Family Fund
Xcel Energy Foundation

Director $9,000+
Connexus Energy
Crow Wing County
East Central Energy
Essentia Health-St. Joseph's Foundation
Minnesota Power, an Alliant Company
Stearns County

Associate $6,000+
Morrison County
Laura Jane Musser Fund
Pine County
Schlagel, Inc.
Steams Electric
US Bancorp
West Central Telephone Association
Wright County

Entrepreneur $2,000+
Anderson Brothers Construction Company
Anonymous Donor
Amy L. Scott Family Foundation
City of Baxter
Benton County
City of Brainerd
Bremer Bank
Consolidated Telecommunications Company
Crow Wing Power
DeZURIK, Inc.
City of Elk River
Lee & Jan Hanson
Isanti County
Kanabec County
City of Little Falls
Mid Minnesota Federal Credit Union
City of Milaca
Mille Lacs County
City of Princeton
City of St. Cloud
Sherburne County
Minnesota Department of Human Services
Todd County
Wadena County
City of Wadena

Investor $1,000+
City of Albertville
American Heritage National Bank
American National Bank of Minnesota
City of Andover
Arvig Communication Systems
John E. Babcock
The Bank of Elk River
Bank of the West
BankVista
Rick & Helga Bauerly Family Fund
of Central Minnesota Community Foundation
City of Becker
Benefit Innovations
City of Big Lake
Dick & Mimi Bitzan Family Fund
of Central Minnesota Community Foundation
BlackRidgeBANK
Brainerd Lakes General Fund
of the Brainerd Lakes Area Community Foundation
Lynn & Darren Businger
City of Cambridge
Cambridge Medical Center on behalf of Allina Health System
Chisago County
Citizens State Bank of Waverly
City of Clarissa
Clow Stamping Company
Compeer Financial
City of Crosslake
Edelweiss Cabinetry
City of Eden Valley
Eich Motor Company
Linda Eich DesJardins
Don & Deanna Engen
Falcon National Bank
Farmers & Merchants State Bank
Charitable Fund of the Central Minnesota Community Foundation
First Bank & Trust
First National Bank of Milaca
First National Bank North
First State Bank of Wyoming
Frandsen Bank & Trust
Kathy & Neil Gaalswyk
Harvest Bank
Don Hickman & Sandra Kaplan
Hooman
Jo & Larry Korf
City of Lake Shore
LINDAR / Avantech
Little Falls Area Chamber
of Commerce
City of Long Prairie
Long Prairie Packing Company
City of Maple Lake
Marco Technologies
McDowell Company
City of Melrose
Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative
City of Monticello
City of Mora
Neighborhood National Bank
City of Nisswa
NOR-SON, Inc.
Martin & Susan Paradeis
Park Industries, Inc.
Pequot Tool & Manufacturing
City of Pierz
City of Pine City
Pine County Bank
Plaza Park Bank
City of Rockford
City of St. Joseph
City of St. Michael
City of Sandstone
City of Sartell
City of Sauk Centre
City of Sauk Rapids
John & Bonnie Schlagel
Sherburne State Bank & Sente Bank
Rita and Everett Sobania
SPECO Economic Development Foundation
of The Saint Paul Foundation
SEH, Inc.
City of Staples
State Bank of Cold Spring
Stearns Bank NA
Charlotte Stephens
Stern Rubber Company
Todd-Wadena Electric Cooperative
Tim & Carrie Topp
Andrea Turner
Dr. Paul Van Gorp & Roberta Knutson
Maggie & Matt Vaniek
Ludmila Voelker
Wadena State Bank
City of Waite Park
Gene and Bernie Waldorf
Wells Fargo Bank NA
Widseth Smith Nolting and Associates, Inc.
Jeff & Laurie Wig
Wyoming Machine, Inc.

Up to $1,000+
Kristi & Levi Ackley
Jane Aldens
City of Albany
Alpine Cabinetry
AmazonSmile
Anakkala, Berns & Co. PLLP
Anderholm Consulting
Mary Backlund
City of Backus
City of Belgrade
Mary Anne & Donald Bennett
City of Bertha
BioMatrix
Birnhline, Inc.
Charles & Kathryn Black Lance
Steve & Katya Botz
City of Braham
City of Breezy Point
City of Broten
Dan & Marie Bullert
Michael & Kathleen Burton
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City of Cokato
City of Cold Spring
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Barb Downs & Dave Wood
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David & Kim Ellingson
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Chris Fastner & Kathy Hakes-Fastner
City of Fifty Lakes
Tammy Feige Filippi & Pete Filippi
Thomas & LaRae Foehehenbacher
Bruce & Mary Fogle
City of Foley
Dan & Annette Frank
Jeff Fromm
City of Garrison
City of Genola
Samuel Gill
Harold K. Gramstad
City of Grey Eagle
Rebecca Gross
Brenda & Manfred Gugglberger
City of Hackensack
City of Hanover
City of Harding
Nolen Harness
City of Henriette
City of Holdingford
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Jolene Howard
Interior Components Group
City of Ironton
City of Isanti
City of Isle
City of Jenkins
Arnold S. Johnson Enterprises, LLC
Jane Johnston
City of Kimball
Jeremy & Barb Larson
City of Lindstrom
City of Longville
City of Manhattan Beach
Bob & Lisa McClintick
City of Menahga
Michele & Zachary Miller
Minnesota National Bank
Monroy Law Office, PLLC
City of Montrose
Braden & Cheri Moore
City of Motley
Walter & Adele Munsteman
Network for Good
Noffsinger North Manufacturing, Inc.
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City of Ogilvie
City of Onamia
City of Osage
John & Ann Pate
City of Paynesville
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City of Pillager
City of Quamoa
City of Randall
Randall State Bank
City of Remer
City of Rice
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City of Riverton
RiverWood Bank
City of Rockville
City of Royalton
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City of St. Rosa
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Thrivent Financial for Lutherans
Dianne C. Tuft
City of Upsala
Dr. Ashish Vaidya
Tony Wagner
City of Wahkon
City of Walker
City of Waverly
Western Bank
Amanda & Scott Whittemore
Wayne & Lori Wolden
City of Wyoming
City of Zimmerman
To our 2017 COMMUNITY BUILDERS CIRCLE Members.

Your Region. Your Initiative. Your Foundation.

The Initiative Foundation’s Community Builders Circle began in 2017 as a way to bring special recognition to those who are vested in the economic and community vitality of Central Minnesota. Community Builders Circle members support the Foundation’s general endowment or programs with a contribution of $1,000 or more. Members’ gifts provide dependable, perpetual income to support regional grants and programming. In 2017, Community Builders Circle members contributed $244,000 to the Initiative Foundation’s general endowment. We thank you for your generosity.

Visit ifound.org/philanthropy/community-builders to learn how you can join and make a difference.

INDIVIDUALS
- John E Babcock
- Rick & Helga Bauerly Family Fund of Central Minnesota Community Foundation
- Dick & Mimi Bitzan Family Fund of Central Minnesota Community Foundation
- Lynn & Darren Bushinger
- Linda Eich DesJardins
- Don & Deanna Engen
- Kathy & Neal Gaalswyk
- Anonymous Donor
- Lee & Jan Hanson
- Don Hickman & Sandra Kaplan
- Jo & Larry Korf
- Martin & Susan Paradis
- John & Bonnie Schlagel
- Rita and Everett Sobania
- Charlotte Stephens
- Tim & Carrie Tripp
- Andrea Turner
- Dr. Paul Van Gorp & Roberta Knutson
- Maggie & Matt Varilek
- Ludmila Voelker
- Jeff & Laurie Wig

BUSINESSES
- American Heritage National Bank
- American National Bank of Minnesota
- Anderson Brothers Construction Company
- Arvig Communications Systems
- Bank of the West
- BankVista
- Benefit Innovations
- BlackRidgeBANK
- Brainerd Lakes General Fund of the Brainerd Lakes Area Community Foundation
- Bremer Bank
- Cambridge Medical Center on behalf of Allina Health System
- Citizens State Bank of Waverly
- CliftonLarsonAllen LLP
- Clow Stamping Company
- Compeer Financial
- Connexus Energy
- Consolidated Telecommunications Company
- Crow Wing Power
- DeZURIK, Inc.
- East Central Energy
- Edelweiss Cabinetry
- Eich Motor Company
- Essentia Health-St. Joseph’s Foundation
- Falcon National Bank
- Farmers & Merchants State Bank Charitable Fund of the Central Minnesota Community Foundation
- First Bank & Trust
- First National Bank North
- First National Bank of Milaca
- First State Bank of Wyoming
- Frandsen Bank & Trust
- Granite Equity Partners, LLC
- Harvest Banks
- LINDAR / Avantech
- Little Falls Area Chamber of Commerce
- Long Prairie Packing Company
- Marco Technologies, LLC
- McDowell Company
- Mid Minnesota Federal Credit Union
- Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative
- Neighborhood National Bank
- NOR-SON, Inc.
- Park Industries, Inc.
- Pequot Tool & MFG., Inc.
- Pine Country Bank
- Plaza Park Banks
- Schlagel, Inc.
- SEH, Inc.
- Sherburne State Banks & Santy Banks
- Sourcewell (formerly National Joint Powers Alliance)
- SPEDCO Economic Development Foundation of The Saint Paul Foundation
- State Bank of Cold Spring
- Stearns Bank NA
- Stearns Electric Association
- Stern Rubber Company
- The Bank of Elk River
- Todd-Wadena Electric Cooperative
- US Bancorp
- Wadena State Bank
- Wells Fargo Bank MN
- West Central Telephone Association
- Widseth Smith Nolting and Assoc., Inc.
- Wyoming Machine, Inc.

*Individuals and businesses that have pledged in both 2017 and 2018. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, your Initiative Foundation contribution is tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. The Foundation owns and manages financial contributions for the benefit of Central Minnesota communities.
Like every other resident of Wadena, Minn., Wayne Wolden will never forget the afternoon of June 17, 2010, when clouds the color of ash started twisting and turning through the sky. “My 17-year-old daughter and I were in the basement holding onto our dog and cat and each other,” he said. “The house was shaking and our ears were popping. I looked at her and said, ‘Hang on. This isn’t going to be good.’”

When the Woldens emerged from their century-old farmhouse, which miraculously survived a storm that was a mile wide with wind speeds up to 170 miles per hour, it was clear to Wolden, the town’s mayor at the time, that Wadena had been dealt a devastating blow. In fact, hundreds of homes were either damaged or destroyed, as were the old community center, the hockey arena, the county fairgrounds, the high school and a handful of businesses. Headstones in the local cemetery were toppled and dragged across lawns. Thousands of the town’s trees—a point of pride for Wadena residents—had been uprooted.

And yet, even though that day still stands as the worst on record for severe weather in the state—48 tornadoes in all—the strength and resilience of the community was apparent from the moment the sirens started blaring. Not only was there not a single fatality, the residents of Wadena proved that you can rebuild your community and make it even more vibrant and dynamic than before disaster struck.

“The entire community got together,” said Jeffrey Browne, executive vice president of Wadena State Bank and co-chair of the Wadena Regional Wellness Center Fund, which was formed to respond to the disaster. “There was no complaining. No, ‘Why us?’”

Wadena was fortunate in that it had taken steps before the disaster to make sure that the public buildings were properly insured. But the path to recovery also involved the help of citizens and agencies of all stripes, from parishioners to Boy Scouts, from state and federal agencies to nonprofits. The
Initiative Foundation was an active partner from the outset, establishing an online portal to host donations for recovery along with $10,000 in matching funds. During the next two years, the Foundation helped to raise more than $2 million in donations and hosted a visit from the Minnesota Design Team—a volunteer group of architects, urban planners, tourism experts and others—to support the community as they did the important work of imagining a new future for Wadena.

"The point was to give people hope," said Don Hickman, vice president for community and workforce development at the Initiative Foundation. "A key element when it comes to responding to a natural disaster is for people to resume their lives as soon as possible. If they don’t have work and can’t feed their families, they will leave town."

Wadena rose to the challenge, and then some. Eight years after the tornado, the city has a new high school—paid for without taking on a dollar of debt. It is also home to the Maslowski Wellness and Research Center, a 57,000-square-foot community center that boasts both a lap pool and a recreational pool, and anything else you could want for fitness, including weights, a walking track, and basketball, racquetball and pickleball courts.

To build the center, which like the high school is debt-free, the city raised millions from hundreds of donors, including a sizable donation from the Maslowski Charitable Trust, for which the center is named. ‘The Mas’ attracts people from across the region who are drawn to its state-of-the-art amenities. ‘I use the center frequently and I don’t know 70 to 80 percent of the people there,’ Brown said. ‘People are coming to Wadena from other communities, and that means they are spending money at our other businesses as well.’

In addition to replacing public buildings, the city planted thousands of trees and buried previously above-ground power lines to make them more storm-resilient. Parks have been restored and upgraded, in one case with a new warming house, ball field, sidewalks and bathroom.

The net result is a city that can look toward the future with confidence that it’s poised to meet the needs of its citizens. And with its post-storm tasks largely accomplished, the Wadena Regional Wellness Center Fund—the source of generosity that drove many of the community’s improvements—is winding down, it’s purpose now complete. "100 percent of the pledges were honored," said Brown. "To raise $2.8 million in a town our size without one default is amazing and shows the character of the community."

Wolden couldn’t agree more. "I’m so proud of the resiliency of our people," he said. "We were able to look at all we lost and realize it was just stuff. We didn’t lose lives. Then we rolled up our sleeves and helped our neighbors. Whether it was serving meals or coming to community meetings about how to rebuild or help with fundraising efforts, we persevered.”

“100 percent of the pledges were honored. To raise $2.8 million in a town our size without one default is amazing and shows the character of the community.”
The Initiative Foundation awarded more than $3.2 million in 2017 through 153 grants to close opportunity gaps and increase the economic and social well-being of our region. Partner Fund and scholarship award listings are available at ifound.org/community/grants.

Duplicates as a result of one or more grants to the same entity have been removed. For complete grant award listings and descriptions, visit ifound.org/community/grants.
“It’s so exciting to work with an organization that cares so deeply about positively impacting our community. We serve struggling teens and are able to put them on a track for success after high school because the Initiative Foundation gave us a grant. Thank you for making a huge difference in the lives of struggling teens in Central Minnesota.”

Beth Kalbow,
Area Director, Sandstone TreeHouse

“Through the Initiative Foundation’s support of our Tour of Manufacturing event, we were able to open the eyes of many youth who were able to see first-hand the many job opportunities that exist in the Greater St. Cloud area.”

Gail Cruikshank,
Talent Director, Greater St. Cloud Development Corporation
OUR PARTNERS

Loans & Equity Investments

Focused outreach with financial institutions, economic development organizations and local units of government throughout our region remains a priority to increase loan opportunities in all communities.

In addition to its gap lending, the Initiative Foundation continues to collaborate with partners to ensure that our entire region has access to micro-lending programs. We also maintain funding and referral relationships with regional Small Business Development Centers to provide technical assistance to businesses located in Central Minnesota.

Partner Funds

The Foundation in 2017 hosted 99 Partner Funds with a value of $14.6 million. These funds allow donors to focus on local charitable needs while leaving the administrative tasks to Initiative Foundation staff.

Community Funds
Black Oak Getty Community Foundation*
Delano Area Community Foundation
Greater Pequot Lakes Community Foundation*
Greater Pine Area Endowment
Isle Area Community Foundation
Longville Area Community Foundation Endowment
Melrose Area Relief Fund
Morrison County Area Foundation
Rum River Community Foundation
Staples-Motley Area Community Foundation
Three Rivers Community Foundation

Education Funds
Albany Area Education Foundation*
Braham Area Education Foundation*
Cajuna Lakes Education Foundation
Lake Region Christian School Education Foundation
Little Falls Education Foundation
Pillager Education Foundation
Sauk Rapids-Rice Education Foundation

Donor-Advised Funds
Anderson Brothers Family Fund
Bob and Marsha Bangor Endowment Fund
Bruce & Diane Schimman Fund
Central Minnesota Builder's Association Fund & Initiative*
Chuck Christian Community Spirit Fund
Edelynburg Family Fund
Evelyn M. Nolte Pinkney Fund*
Gaalswyk Family Fund
Granite Equity Partners Fund
Hanowski Family Fund
Jim & HK Stuart Memorial Fund
John & Bonnie Schlager Endowment
Josh Richardson Family Fund
Loren & Kathy Money Family Fund
Mark Wood Foundation
Mel & Jeanette Beaudry Fund
Patrick & Jane Mitchell Family Fund
Paula & Chad Becker Fund

Scholarship Funds
Alternative Sources of Energy Fund
Archie and Isabelle Powell Family Memorial Scholarship Fund
Bachman Engelking Scholarship Fund*
Bert and Helen LeBlanc Legacy Scholarship Fund
Bett Ford Menzel Scholarship Fund
Beverly M. Pantzke Scholarship Fund
Bob & Pauline Johnson Memorial Scholarship Fund
Bob Wright Memorial IFPA Scholarship Fund
Cambridge Memorial Hospital Scholarship Fund
Dorn Family Fund
H. Eugene Menzel Scholarship Fund*
Holdingford Scholarship Endowment
Little Falls Scholarship Fund
Madison's Pine Beach Scholarship Fund
Minnesota Christian Writers Scholarship Fund
Pillager Scholarship Fund
Shawn Grittner Memorial Scholarship Fund
Staples Knights of Columbus Council #1803–
Lloyd & Marion Giddings Scholarship Fund
William & Ethel Nelson-Zimmerman Scholarship Fund
ZES Scholarship Fund

Designated Funds
Lake Region Conservation Club Fund
Scott & Jane Stuart Memorial Park Fund
Tracy & Julius Kurpius Family Fund for the
Living Legacy Garden

Agency Funds
Big Birch Lake Endowment Fund
Big Fish Lake Association Emergency Fund*
Bridges Manufacturing Scholarship Fund
Central Minnesota CEO Fund
Conservancy Fund of Big Fish Lake Association
Conservancy Fund of Roosevelt and Lawrence
Area Lakes Association
Fish Trap Lake Endowment Fund
Friends of Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge Fund
Gull Chain Preservation Endowment Fund
Land and Waters Preservation Trust
Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation Family of Funds
Minnesota Pioneer Park Endowment Fund
Partnership in Life Fund (Horizon Health)
Paws & Claws Animal Shelter
Sacrred Heart-Knights of Columbus Fund
Wright County Historical Society Fund

Field of Interest Funds
Cambridge Memorial Hospital Foundation
Chicago Lakes ABC Initiative Fund*
Crow Wing Environment Protection Advised Fund
Delano Emergency Family Fund
Family Farm Fund
Innovative Schools Project Fund
Lake Area Medical Development Association Fund
Manufacturing Fund of Central Minnesota

Innovative Schools Project Fund
Playing it Forward: The Kenneth & Evelyn Pinkney Young
Musicians’ Fund
The Initiators’ Fund
Thrive Fund

Special Projects
Oakland Cemetery Fund
Sartell OGPAC Fund
Veterans Art Monument Fund
Wadena Regional Wellness Center Fund

Business Loan Funds
Menahga Economic Development Loan Fund
Princeton Economic Development Loan Fund
SCSU MicroLending Program Fund
Todd-Wadena Economic Development Loan Fund

* Indicates new Partner Funds created in 2017
“The Initiative Foundation’s Financial Resiliency program was one of the most powerful, professional and relevant trainings that I have participated in as an executive director, and I know our Big Lake Community Food Shelf board members who participated in the trainings felt the same way. It has helped to change the culture of fundraising by equipping us with the tools and resources to be more financially independent.”

Ali Noble,
Executive Director, Big Lake Community Food Shelf

“The ‘Free Ride’ program, made possible by a grant from The Initiative Foundation, has been a win-win situation for both Soup for the Soul, Inc., and Timber Trails Public Transit. More people are able to access our soup kitchen to dine and socialize with friends despite the weather, handicaps, financial hardship or lack of transportation.”

Kristen Pulford,
Soup for the Soul Board Member and Volunteer, Mora
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