



DULUTH SUPERIOR AREA
**COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION**

Private giving for the public good.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Power of storytelling celebrated at event

Community Foundation hears from national nonprofit StoryCorps at Annual Celebration

DULUTH—Storytelling has the power to educate and change communities, especially when it addresses challenging issues such as poverty and the opportunity gap, a national expert told about 300 guests today at the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation’s Annual Celebration.

Donors, supporters, community leaders, nonprofit partners and others attended the event in the Lake Superior Ballroom of the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center. The celebration is the annual meeting where the Community Foundation assesses its work over the past 12 months, looks ahead to the coming year and announces new members of its Board of Trustees.

The theme of this year’s celebration was “Those Who See,” a recognition of donors who identify needs and put resources to work on many fronts, from grants that have led to community improvements to scholarships enabling local students to attend college.

The highlight of the celebration was a presentation by StoryCorps, a national nonprofit based in New York City that builds communities through storytelling. Emily Janssen, StoryCorps’ associate director of community training, explained how the nonprofit has used the power of storytelling since its founding in 2003 to bring about change nationwide.

Janssen’s appearance coincided with the arrival of a StoryCorps team in the Twin Ports this week to record stories of local residents exploring issues of poverty and the opportunity gap. The goal of the local recordings is to help inform and educate Twin Ports residents about the realities of these issues, expressed through local voices, and to better understand how poverty affects the region. ALLETE/Minnesota Power is proud to host the visitors from StoryCorps.

In Duluth, 3,346 children, or 21.5 percent, live in poverty, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. In Superior, the number is 1,038 children, or 25.8 percent. Both are higher than the Minnesota average of 12.2 percent, the Wisconsin average of 15 percent and the national average of 18 percent.

The figures were part of the motivation for the Community Foundation to embark three years ago on its Opportunity Rising Initiative, designed to narrow the opportunity gap through public awareness and more than \$1.5 million in innovative grant work.

“We have made so much progress on these issues, but we have much more work to do,” said Community Foundation President and CEO Holly C. Sampson. “Our Annual Celebration is a day when we assess our efforts, share thoughts about our progress and commit to the important next steps needed to ensure that all kids in our region achieve their full potential. Reaching that goal is essential for us to achieve our full potential as a community.”

Stories of Twin Ports residents recorded this week will be shared through the websites of the Community Foundation (dsacommunityfoundation.com) and its Opportunity Rising Initiative (opportunityrising.org). Like all other StoryCorps recordings, they also will be available on the StoryCorps website (storycorps.org) and archived for future historians in the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress.

Also at the Annual Celebration, the Community Foundation announced that ALLETE/Minnesota Power had received the founding Opportunity Rising Partner Award. The award recognizes local employers addressing the opportunity gap. Sampson cited ALLETE/Minnesota Power’s commitment to college scholarships as one reason the company was chosen.

“We are honored to receive this recognition,” said ALLETE President Bethany M. Owen, who accepted the award. “Addressing the opportunity gap is an important part of ALLETE’s and Minnesota Power’s commitment to sustainability and to helping individuals, families, and our communities thrive. I encourage other companies in our region to join this important effort because together, we can make a difference.”

Also at the event, the Community Foundation reported that it raised a record \$5 million in the past year, that it has awarded \$57 million in grants and scholarships since its inception in 1983 and that it has established a record 415 charitable funds. In addition, the nonprofit also welcomed three new members to its Board of Trustees: Koresh Lakhan, a retired educator; Joscelyn Skandel, supervisor of rates, financial reporting and budgeting for Superior Water, Light & Power; and Sandra Wright, also a retired educator. Board officers for the coming year will be: Superior attorney David Kropid, chair; Owen, vice chair; Essentia Health Chief Legal Officer Teresa O’Toole, secretary; and retired City of Duluth Chief Administrative Officer David Montgomery, treasurer.

Annual Celebration sponsors were: the Duluth News Tribune; Minnesota Power Employees Credit Union; North Shore Investments and Trust; US Bank; WIPFLi; Frandsen Bank & Trust; Fryberger Law Firm; Hanft Fride, A Professional Association; The Jamar Co.; and Johnson, Killen & Seiler.

ABOUT THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION:

The Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation encourages private giving for the public good. It is a permanent community endowment, built by gifts from hundreds of individuals and organizations. Guided by a volunteer Board of Trustees, it makes grants to nonprofit organizations and to individuals for scholarships while providing leadership on important community initiatives in northeast Minnesota and northwest Wisconsin. Since its inception in 1983, the foundation has distributed more than \$57 million and has established 415 funds, each with its own charitable purpose. For more information, please visit dsacommunityfoundation.com.

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