



DULUTH SUPERIOR AREA  
**COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION**

*Private giving for the public good.*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Foundation highlights ‘Opportunity Rising’

Annual Celebration shows how Twin Ports are narrowing ‘Opportunity Gap’

DULUTH—A discussion among individuals making progress in their lives and helping others to overcome the “Opportunity Gap” were among the highlights at the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation’s 2017 Annual Celebration.

More than 300 donors, supporters, community leaders, nonprofit partners and others attended the event in the Harborside Ballroom of the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center. The event is the annual meeting where the organization assesses its work and also announces new members of its Board of Trustees. For much of the past two years, the Community Foundation has focused on addressing the Opportunity Gap, the vast differences in opportunities available to children living in poverty locally and nationwide.

The theme of this year’s event was “Opportunity Rising,” a recognition of work underway to narrow the Opportunity Gap locally, including through \$1.5 million in grant work underway among nine nonprofits and one government agency to work with families and children. The Community Foundation awarded those grants nearly a year ago. Panelists in the discussion who shared stories of advancement included:

- Vickie Meyers, a participant in a Community Action Duluth program, funded by the Community Foundation, that provides transportation assistance so families can more fully take advantage of work and education opportunities.
- Michael Kelly, a 2016 Duluth East High School graduate who received scholarships from the Community Foundation to help better himself through college education at St. John’s University in St. Joseph, Minn.
- Amanda Imes, a volunteer at Mentor Duluth, another Opportunity Gap grant recipient, who is mentoring a girl and helping the child’s family.

“Opportunity Rising starts with each of us realizing we can make a difference in the lives of others,” said Holly C. Sampson, President of the Community Foundation. “These are powerful stories of not only our grants at work but also of Twin Ports neighbors stepping up to help neighbors. It’s this kind of in-person commitment that is essential for us to narrow the Opportunity Gap.”

Also at the event, attendees were asked to write on sticky notes what they have done in the past year to become engaged in work that will narrow the Opportunity Gap. Attendees at last year's event were asked to pledge their engagement. This year's exercise demonstrated the many efforts already taking place as well as a recommitment for work that attendees pledged to undertake in the coming year.

In the next year, the Community Foundation expects to launch a public outreach and awareness campaign better explaining the Opportunity Gap and how local residents can get involved to help. The Community Foundation also plans to report on progress being made by the 10 grant recipients.

The Community Foundation took up the Opportunity Gap charge after its 2015 Annual Celebration, where Harvard University Professor Dr. Robert D. Putnam was the keynote speaker. Putnam, an Opportunity Gap expert, wrote the best-selling book, "Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis," which addressed the issue. Some of the book's research was conducted in Duluth.

In addition to the Opportunity Gap work, the Community Foundation welcomed two new members to its Board of Trustees: Suzanne Blank, attorney with the Till, Salzer & Blank Law Firm in Superior, and Teresa O'Toole, Chief Legal Officer of Essentia Health in Duluth.

The organization also announced that it had crossed threshold of more than \$50 million in grant funds and scholarships distributed since its inception in 1983 and had achieved a record with 396 funds now under management.

Sponsors of the Annual Celebration were: the Sieh Yung Group of Merrill Lynch (premier sponsor); the Duluth News Tribune; U.S. Bank; Hanft Frider; Flint Group; Jamar Co.; Johnson, Killen & Seiler; Minnesota Power Employees Credit Union; Republic Bank; and WIPFLi.

#### **ABOUT THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION:**

The Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation encourages private giving for the public good. The foundation is a permanent community endowment, built by gifts from hundreds of individuals and organizations. Guided by a volunteer Board of Trustees, the foundation makes grants to nonprofit organizations and to individuals for scholarships and provides leadership on important community initiatives in northeast Minnesota and northwest Wisconsin. Since its inception in 1983, the organization has distributed more than \$50 million and holds 396 funds, each with its own charitable purpose. Learn more at [dsacommunityfoundation.com](http://dsacommunityfoundation.com).

Regional affiliates of the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation include: the Two Harbors Area Fund (created in 1998), the Apostle Islands Area Community Fund (created in 2000), the Cook County Community Fund (created in 2003), the Eveleth Area Community Foundation (created in 2008) and the Chequamegon Bay Area Community Fund (created in 2011).

#### **FOR MEDIA INQUIRIES:**

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