



DULUTH SUPERIOR AREA
**COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The work to narrow the Opportunity Gap in the Twin Ports starts with listening

That has been the focus of the [Opportunity Rising Initiative](#) since it began in 2015 with efforts by the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation and its partners. After identifying the issues of children and families living in poverty as a major focus, the Community Foundation and its partners began holding a series of listening sessions that opened eyes, created awareness and provided the basis for more than \$1.5 million in grants issued since 2016 to begin narrowing the gap.

Now, with public understanding of this issue critical for the Twin Ports to take the next steps, the Community Foundation has invited the non-profit, StoryCorps, to our community. StoryCorps is a nationally known nonprofit that records, preserves, and shares stories of people from all walks of life in order to build a more just and compassionate world. Since 2003, the organization has recorded and distributed audio stories of people from all backgrounds and beliefs through storycorps.org and National Public Radio.

In late May, the Community Foundation will bring StoryCorps to the Twin Ports to conduct 15 interviews over three days with local residents about issues surrounding the Opportunity Gap and the Opportunity Rising Initiative. Stories will include those from people who are dealing with the Opportunity Gap in their daily lives, who are working to help children and families rise up from poverty, and individuals who have done so themselves.

A StoryCorps representative will provide an update on those recordings and will make a special presentation to guests at the Community Foundation's Annual Celebration, from 4-6 p.m. May 22 in

the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center. During the reception StoryCorps will lead a “closer look” discussion for those interested guests.

Four years ago, the Community Foundation began its work to address the Opportunity Gap in earnest by inviting [Dr. Robert D. Putnam](#) of Harvard University to the Twin Ports to give the keynote address at its 2015 Annual Celebration. Putnam is the author of “Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis,” a New York Times best-selling book examining the Opportunity Gap. Putnam and a team of scholars conducted research in cities nationwide, including Duluth, showing the gap widening.

In 2016, the Community Foundation awarded \$1.5 million to 10 nonprofit grantees in the Twin Ports for groundbreaking work to help children and families in poverty and to narrow the Opportunity Gap. [The projects](#), still underway and now joined by others, are connecting children and families to services including education, transportation, mentoring and employment. Many of the grants are for innovative efforts that may serve as national models for improving lives of children and families.

In Duluth, 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 numbers are higher than the Minnesota average of 12.2 percent, the Wisconsin average of 15 percent and the national average of 18 percent.

Scholars, civic leaders and service providers have warned that the gap between rich and poor children and families is widening across the United States, creating increasingly separate societies.

That chasm threatens the ability of individual communities and the nation as a whole to solve problems, seize opportunities and achieve goals for economic growth and quality living.

For more information about this year’s Annual Celebration or to RSVP for this free event, please go to dsacommunityfoundation.com. Those with questions also may call [218-726-0232](tel:218-726-0232) or email info@dsacommunityfoundation.com.

FOR MEDIA INQUIRIES:

Rob Karwath | North Coast Communications
218-343-9418 | rob@northcoastcommunications.com