

# CONNECT

*Fall/Winter 2022*



## LOCAL DOLLARS AT WORK

Pipestone Development  
Company LLC retains and  
reinvests community wealth.

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Pictured: Members of the Pipestone Development Company  
Board of Directors include (from left) Dan Scotting, Joan  
Stout, Ryan Weinkauff, Jeremy Whipple and Corey Popma.



**SOUTHWEST INITIATIVE  
FOUNDATION**

# A FINAL NOTE FROM DIANA'S DESK

*President/CEO Diana Anderson*

While I'm looking forward to all the wonderful things that retirement will bring, a part of me will always look back with joy and gratitude for the remarkable people and places that make southwest Minnesota a great place to call home.

My heart is so full as I look around the region and think of all the good we have been able to do together. There are many wonderful memories from the 22 years I've been at the foundation. One in particular that I will always carry with me is sitting at the Council on Foundations Community Foundation Conference in 2015 to hear Robert Putnam talk about his best-selling book, "Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis." Rob Saunders was board chair at the time, and we were preparing to start a new strategic planning process.

As we listened to the data on the challenges facing kids today, Rob and I knew that we had just heard something so powerful that we couldn't ignore it. Using data specific to the kids in southwest Minnesota, the board adopted a bold vision to close the opportunity gap for all kids in our region, and the Grow Our Own strategy was launched. It was the first time that the foundation had committed to applying its resources across all program areas to address a single challenge – one that the board felt would have the greatest impact on our communities 30 years from now.

Today, that work looks like building vibrant and welcoming communities, supporting kids and families, strengthening the economy and ensuring all people feel a sense of belonging. And we are seeing positive changes. In southwest Minnesota the number of children under age 6 living in poverty fell from 18 percent to 15 percent over the years 2015 to 2019, according to American Community Survey data.



It's been an honor serving as President and CEO. Throughout all my roles here, I got to see wonderful places and meet people who are doing remarkable things in southwest Minnesota and beyond. I'm proud to have played a part in a southwest Minnesota that is stronger and more resilient.

As I prepare to leave, I am incredibly optimistic about the future of Southwest Initiative Foundation. We are blessed to have talented staff who care deeply about our region and work tirelessly to fulfill our mission of connecting people, investing in ideas, and building communities. There has been strong and visionary leadership from board members throughout our history, and I have absolute trust and confidence in the Board of Directors and its commitment to our organization's vision, mission and values. The next President/CEO is in good hands.

Each of you, too, are an important part of Southwest Initiative Foundation's story and my time here. You continue to help us realize a bright future through your ongoing care, leadership and support of this organization. Even as I step down from my official role, I look forward to continuing to be part of making southwest Minnesota a special place where all people can thrive. ▲

# CELEBRATING

## 22 years with gratitude

Diana joined SWIF in 2001 as development director and in 2007 was promoted to the newly created position of chief operating officer, providing leadership and oversight to internal operations. In 2011, Diana was again promoted to vice president/COO and played a more visible role in program development and delivery. In January 2015, she was named President/CEO.

Diana has guided this organization into a new vision and mission, and aligned a new set of values, bringing all of the work our team does across economic development, community impact, and philanthropy around the focus of our kids. Keep reading to see highlights of the work she's championed.

*"Diana has been an important part of our history as a foundation. The board is grateful for Diana's thoughtful, inclusive, and bold leadership."*

Patti Dols, Chair of the SWIF Board of Directors



Diana at the annual Life Connections expo in Willmar.

## COMMUNITY FOUNDATION PROGRAM

Southwest Minnesotans can support the charities, and the places, that are important in their lives through our Community Foundation Program that was piloted in 1999, formally adopted in 2001 and developed with Diana's guidance. From four communities, it's grown to 31 affiliate partners, helping retain wealth in our rural region.

*"It started with a focus on funding and gifts, but quickly grew into helping communities think about their shared values, how they wanted to reinvest. We didn't treat it as a transactional relationship. We wove in capacity building and leadership development as we saw the work bringing life to our mission at the local level."* – DIANA ANDERSON

Continued on page 4



gratitude



Pat Costello (left) receives the Southwest Initiative Foundation award for Keep It Growing<sup>SM</sup> at SWIF's 30th anniversary celebration, alongside Diana and Bob Thurston, board chair at the time.

Continued from page 3

## GROWING HOME CIRCLE

The Growing Home Circle was a new strategy in 2004 to build our financial resilience. As we faced a challenge grant opportunity from the McKnight Foundation, individuals, businesses and organizations stepped in to help us secure that full match, which grew our capacity to serve the mission in bigger ways. Many founding members of the Growing Home Circle were connected to the opportunity through Diana's outreach.

Growing Home Circle members have helped grow the endowment by \$10.3 million when combined with McKnight match and earnings on investments. This creates stability for meeting regional needs.

"My heart is so full as I look around the region and think of all the good Southwest Initiative Foundation has been able to do. There are many wonderful memories from the 22 years I've been at SWIF."

Read Diana's full reflection on page 2



SWIF staff take part in a party at the Christian Community Outreach Center (CCOC) in Olivia in 2004. The CCOC received grant funding from SWIF to support programming for kids.

## KEEP IT GROWING

In 2009, we received our first gift of farmland into the Keep It Growing<sup>SM</sup> Farmland Giving Program. To our knowledge, this program was the first of its kind in the nation for community foundations, designed by Pat Costello, an attorney in Lakefield. We've since shared this model with other community foundations. Today, we have 1,730 acres in the program.

*"Keep It Growing has been the single most important charitable innovation in our history, and perhaps in all of rural philanthropy, a way to keep the generational transfer of wealth in Greater Minnesota. It was exciting to work together and bring Pat's idea to life at the foundation."* – DIANA ANDERSON



Worthington High School's Future Teachers of America club hosts SMSU President Kumara Jayasuriya and SWIF President/CEO Diana Anderson.

## GROW OUR OWN

In 2016, we launched Grow Our Own, an effort to align our work across economic development, community impact, and giving to ensure all southwest Minnesota kids can get the best start to life and reach their full potential.

*"It was the first time that the foundation had committed to applying its resources across all program areas to address a single challenge - one that the board felt would have the greatest impact on our communities 30-years from now."* – DIANA ANDERSON

We've used a cradle to career model and launched unique new programs like the first Employer Resource Network<sup>®</sup> in Minnesota working directly with employers to support and retain employees, the Southwest Minnesota Teacher Preparation Partnership that is now a model for building the teacher pipeline, Welcoming Week which creates a sense of belonging in our communities, and so much more.

## PANDEMIC RELIEF & RECOVERY

Our original purpose when the foundation started in April 1986 was to alleviate human distress and promote economic development. We found ourselves full circle as we focused on this again at the height of COVID-19 uncertainties, distributing \$24 million in grants and loans into southwest Minnesota over two-plus years.

*"We leveraged and secured resources at a time when our families, businesses, nonprofits, schools, and communities needed it most. And our team found innovative ways to fast track the systems we need to sustain these recovery efforts."* – DIANA ANDERSON

## PRESIDENT/CEO SEARCH UPDATE

As we take time to share our gratitude with Diana, we look forward to continuing to grow this organization and team to serve the southwest Minnesota region that we all care about so deeply.

Our board selected Lyman Executive Search to help them hire our next President/CEO, and a board search committee is managing the process. As this issue of CONNECT was printed, candidate interviews were underway.

Watch our website to stay informed of the search and opportunities to celebrate Diana's leadership.





## PIPESTONE PUTS MONEY ON ITS FUTURE

When the longstanding café closed in Pipestone, the Pipestone Development Company LLC reinvented the local coffee shop as the 8th Avenue Diner and Coffeehouse to bring early morning breakfast back.

Photos by Graceful Willows Photography

**Two eggs and toast is a simple breakfast, so you might be surprised how many people it took to get it on the table. There was the cook, the wait staff - and the 42 members of Pipestone Development Company LLC.**

When the longstanding café closed, the Pipestone Development Company reinvented the local coffee shop as the 8th Avenue Diner and Coffeehouse to bring early morning breakfast back. The diner is one of dozens of projects led by the Pipestone Development Company (PDC) in its first few years of business. They include building and rehabbing housing, renovating commercial space and supporting new small businesses in this town of 4,215.

“There’s a myth in all these small towns that someone’s going to come fix up your town. The reality is there’s

nobody coming to your small town to do that. But we all have wealth in our community. The question is how do you get that money focused on improving your community?” said PDC President Jeremy Whipple.

Southwest Initiative Foundation is a member of the PDC and supports similar efforts in Willmar and Worthington that mobilize local capital to catalyze economic development through entrepreneurship and private investment.

“These funds allow folks who want to reinvest in their community with projects that traditional investors may not touch, like affordable childcare...These types of businesses are critical for economic mobility and the economic patchwork of a community,” said Scott Marquardt, who leads economic development



Pipestone Development Company members JoAnn Wolff (from left), Joan Stout and Jeremy Whipple show off a city lot in a quiet neighborhood where the PDC is developing much needed new housing.

work as part of his role at SWIF. “These investors believe in their neighbor, and that matters.”

Operating as a private company, the PDC has six board members. There aren’t any full-time staff, but Jeremy serves as the point person and members pitch in on projects. The company’s mission is to invest in the future of the community and surrounding areas through leasing, purchasing and owning land, buildings and other property that promotes development. The LLC’s 42 members represent a cross-section of the community.

“We have widows, we have businesspeople, we have young entrepreneurs. It’s a little bit of everything,” said Jeremy, who also owns the local building supply company Pipestone Building Materials Inc. Jeremy grew up in Pipestone and has worked on redevelopment in the past with a smaller group of people.

“If we get a lot of people involved, we can have more impact. If you get more people involved, you have more money and you get more people interested. It’s for the common good of the community,” Jeremy said.

Before, the city’s blight list had at least five commercial properties on it. The PDC has taken on four of those, with two rehabbed already and two in the works. Blighted properties are spaces that are not safe, habitable or in a condition beneficial to the community.

“When you drive through Historic Downtown Pipestone there should not be dilapidated buildings. You shouldn’t have any empty buildings on the highway or on your Main Street,” Jeremy said.

Restaurateur JoAnn Wolff grew up in a small town and moved to Pipestone four years ago. She owns the Stonehouse & Quarry Lounge in town and is the PDC’s marketing director. She was just 25 when she bought in to the Pipestone Development Company. The initial minimum investment was \$25,000, and with two rounds to sell 101 shares the group raised \$2.7 million to get started.

“It’s a huge risk for someone that’s 25 years old. I remember thinking about it for so long. You take it more seriously when it’s a larger amount. You have your arm in the game, not just skin,” JoAnn said.

Funds like these offer many benefits, but a quick return isn’t one of them. Investors care deeply about the places they’re in and are willing to look into the future to realize the gains.

**Continued on page 8**





Lori Williams

## THE CALICO CAT QUILT SHOP: Making the move

Lori Williams took up quilting more than 25 years ago to fill the long winter months after she moved to Minnesota from Nebraska. With help from our Microenterprise Loan Program at SWIF, Lori turned her hobby into a business in 2020 when she opened The Calico Cat Quilt Shop in Pipestone. Earlier this year, she had the opportunity to move her shop to a building renovated by the Pipestone Development Company in Historic Downtown Pipestone.

“The Pipestone Development Company has done a lot for the community. They’ve really worked hard taking buildings that are neglected and getting them back to use in the community. Without them, there is no way I’d be in this building. Especially for these older buildings, you need someone who’s got money and is invested in the community,” Lori said.

Lori said her original location was a great place to start, but it had low ceilings, and the light wasn’t the best for comparing fabrics, something quilters are particular about. The new shop is brightly lit, and vibrant bolts of fabric line one wall, complemented by quilting and sewing supplies like batting, thread, patterns, books and more. Getting everything displayed just right is a work in progress, but it was a good move, and one Lori is happy she didn’t have to make on her own.

“SWIF and PDC both have been huge for me. I wouldn’t be here without SWIF and the support they’ve given me. The chamber of commerce is the other piece of the puzzle. Everybody collaborates well together,” Lori said.

### Continued from page 7

“Everything that you add helps everyone in the community. If you attract a family to town and they want to stay, there’s money for the school. When a property is fixed up and put back to use, that lowers everyone’s property taxes,” Jeremy said.

Successes the company celebrates include financing a 22-year-old business owner whose startup now has three locations, opening the diner and a unique rental property rehab. PDC took an abandoned building and made it into two apartments, with the first floor completely wheelchair accessible for Melissa Stam, whose apartment building in Maple Plain had burned down. Melissa moved to town in June.

“It was lifechanging for her. Now I see her at the grocery store or the Dari King. She gets her life back a little bit,” said Joan Stout, secretary of the PDC and a lifelong community member.

In addition to economic development, the Pipestone Development Company wants to spark a spirit of community service. The PDC owns land it uses to grow sweetcorn as an annual fundraiser for local youth organizations. In total, more than \$19,000 has been donated through this fundraiser. This year, the PDC helped plant more than 4,000 pumpkin seeds and donated the pumpkins to the Pipestone Area Chamber of Commerce for a fall fundraiser.

The community-led work of the PDC is a reminder of the power in small towns and the possibilities created by collaboration.

“All small towns have the means to do this. They can gather people together. But it is a lot of work. You all have to be willing to rally together and get your hands dirty,” JoAnn said.

**Visit [swifoundation.org/PDC](https://swifoundation.org/PDC) to see more photos from around town.**



Joan Stout (from left), Jeremy Whipple and JoAnn Wolff visit Melissa Stam (center), who moved into a customized accessible apartment building in Pipestone in June that was rehabbed by the Pipestone Development Company.



## PIPESTONE AREA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION: A passion for projects in Pipestone

Investing in economic development is just one way for communities to keep wealth local and support important projects. Another is the local community foundation. Established in 1999, the Pipestone Area Community Foundation (PACF) is an affiliate partner of SWIF. Since its founding, the PACF has awarded more than \$1.2 million through grants and special projects.

The group’s efforts include revitalizing Harmon Park, the crown jewel of Pipestone’s city parks. PACF also raised \$415,000 to build a modern event center called Hiawatha Lodge that opened in 2016. And in 2019, the foundation helped Pipestone Area Softball and Baseball Association raise funds for a new concession stand and accessible restrooms.

Currently, local advisory board members are working with Pipestone County Senior Citizens, Pipestone Area Food Shelf and Lutheran Social Services to facilitate the funding and construction of the Schroeder Center, which will house the local senior center, food shelf and Meals on Wheels program.

“We are a group that has a passion of giving Pipestone and the area a better quality of life,” said PACF Advisory Board President Dawn Heidebrink.

# Southwest Initiative Foundation Donors

Our work is not possible without the thousands of partners who made a gift to the foundation during our Fiscal Year 2022. This list below includes the generous financial support of our permanent endowment fund, organizational operations, and legacy gifts to serve our mission. Each gift is an investment in the future of communities, neighbors, families and businesses in southwest Minnesota.

In addition to this list, we thank all partners who supported southwest Minnesota through our specific programs, community foundations and other funds. **We're grateful to all our partners!**

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## SOUTHWEST INITIATIVE FOUNDATION

15 3rd Avenue NW  
Hutchinson, MN 55350



The RTR Educational Foundation has raised nearly \$800,000 in its first four years to give kids the best possible start to life in the rural communities of Russell, Tyler and Ruthton. Local board members are (from left): Bill Clark, Dale Schak, Erin Sanderson, Lora Matzner, Dianne Borreson, Sara Thomas, Jodi Schreurs and John Bornhoft. Not pictured is Dick Kidman.

*Photo submitted by RTR Educational Foundation*

## TOGETHER, WE THRIVE

Thanks to support from our donors and friends, we awarded 1,029 grants totaling \$6,620,292 and disbursed 63 new loans totaling \$2,502,354 in our Fiscal Year 2022. To read more about the ways we create a bright future together in our region, visit our annual impact report online. You'll find stories about partners and projects from Walnut Grove to Willmar, as well as additional financial information.

Visit [swifoundation.org/2022impact](https://swifoundation.org/2022impact).

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