

CONNECT

Advancing southwest Minnesota through leadership,
relationship-building, program development and philanthropy.



SOUTHWEST INITIATIVE
FOUNDATION

We are moving toward a world

of simultaneous promise and peril.
How is that different than any other
time in our past? It's different because
we're now looking at *hyper*-promise
and *hyper*-peril.

ERIK PETERSON, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

FALL 2007

DRUM ROLL PLEASE!
OUR NEW WEB SITE
IS UNVEILED

RENEWABLE ENERGY
& OUR YOUTH

MAKING MINNESOTA
BEAUTIFUL

BI-PRODUCT CREATES
NEW BUSINESS

VISTA: FIGHTING
THE WAR ON POVERTY

CONNECTING THE DOTS

SEVEN REVOLUTIONS

What Do They Mean for Southwest MN?

Erik Peterson, senior vice president at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), spoke these words at a meeting with regional business leaders from throughout southwest Minnesota. Peterson spoke about the "Seven Revolutions," a nationally sought-after presentation that previews life-changing global trends, at the event sponsored by the Southwest Initiative Foundation and The Schwan Food Company.

If Peterson's research-based predictions are accurate, by the year 2025, world population will swell by 1.4 billion; advances in biotechnology could someday prolong human life by one hundred years; rapidly developing countries like China and India will double demand for food, water, land, and energy; and, more

companies like Wal Mart will make the list of the world's top economies.

All of these trends, or revolutions, will necessitate global change and adaptation. Peterson says global food production will need to double by 2025 to feed the world's growing population, and by 2050, the world will need to double its water supply. Peterson also says renewable energy development is moving too slowly and that the transition away from oil will be one of the greatest challenges the United States has ever faced.

Regional business leaders in attendance had the opportunity to ask Peterson questions and dialogue about what the Seven Revolutions will mean for southwest Minnesota.

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Erik Peterson gives his Seven Revolutions presentation to regional business leaders from throughout southwest Minnesota.

A LETTER FROM THE PAST BOARD CHAIRPERSON



*Becky Parker
past chairperson
SWIF board of directors*

As we close the door on another fiscal year, I am amazed at how the Foundation continually evolves to meet the needs of our region.

During the last four plus years as board chair, I have witnessed many exciting changes in the Foundation. Our new strategic plan challenges the board and staff by moving us to a proactive model that focuses on economic advancement and community leadership programming. These two areas hold the key to the future of southwest Minnesota.

I am especially excited about the Connected Communities Initiative that is being developed focusing on smaller communities. No matter what the Foundation does, it is all about the people. If we can build capacity in small communities, it will make the region more successful.

Speaking of people, we just hired a chief operating officer, Diana Anderson. We are looking forward to the opportunities the new staffing structure will give our president/CEO and the overall Foundation.

In addition to the major shift in how we deliver services, we also completed our beautiful new building. I truly believe our facility is a permanent resource marking the "gateway" to southwest Minnesota. If you haven't had a chance, be sure to stop in for a tour.

One of the biggest challenges of the Foundation is the large geographic area that it covers. One of the ways the board stays in touch with the region is by having our meetings in different communities. I have learned so much about the challenges and opportunities of our region from the community members we meet with as a part of our board meetings.

One of the major accomplishments in the last four years is our Growing Home Circle. This group of generous individuals is allowing us to build the assets of the Foundation to continue its valuable work long into the future. If you aren't a member, please consider joining. With our current challenge grant from The McKnight Foundation, gifts to our endowment are matched dollar-for-dollar. Now, that's growing home!

The Southwest Initiative Foundation is committed to the success of our region. It helps communities think more regionally, identifying areas where we can all work together and help each other. The Foundation is truly committed to every person and community in southwest Minnesota.



Drum Roll Please...

**Opportunities for growth and development
in southwest Minnesota just got easier!**

www.swifoundation.org

We've unveiled a brand new Web site that puts all the tools and resources available through the Southwest Initiative Foundation at your fingertips! Now, it's easier than ever to get the latest information about the Foundation and its programs.

- **Read the latest news about the Foundation and what's happening in southwest Minnesota.**
- **Learn about our newest programs and initiatives.**
- **View our calendar for events you won't want to miss.**
- **Submit grant inquiries on-line.**
- **Make a charitable gift to the Foundation on-line.**
- **And much more!**

Be sure to check out
www.swifoundation.org today!



Check out our Minnesota Early Childhood Initiative
Promising Strategies page at

www.swifoundation.org/promisingstrategies.cfm

You'll find a searchable list of outstanding early childhood projects and activities that have been developed by 64 Minnesota Early Childhood coalition communities across the state.

We hope this will be a source of inspiration and idea-generation for you to help create quality care and education opportunities for young children in your community!

RENEWABLE ENERGY TAKES A YOUTH-FOCUSED SPIN

Towering wind turbines across southwest Minnesota's open prairies are just one sign that renewable energy is the next great opportunity for our region. However, we're also losing valuable resources as a high percentage of the young and entry-level workforce – especially among the best and brightest – has been leaving our region for job opportunities and higher salaries in other parts of the state.

The Southwest Initiative Foundation's (SWIF) Renewable Energy Awareness Program (REAP) is addressing this issue by building the skill and career pathways for this industry and educating the youth of the region on renewable energy opportunities. The following are the primary components of REAP:

Youth Energy Summit (YES!) and Community Event

SWIF is partnering with Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center (PWELC) in Spicer to put renewable energy and conservation into the future of west central and southwestern Minnesota through a Youth Energy Summit (YES!). At a two-day Summit on September 20th-

21st, teams of 8th through 12th grade students will be educated about issues and opportunities related to renewable energy in a hands-on environment, learn from energy resources and industry experts and be energized to take on an energy action project in their home communities.

YES was conceived as a means to engage the power of youth in truly making a difference in their community, and in the world, through energy conservation and community-based energy projects, said Dave Pederson executive director of PWELC.

"If renewable energy is the future, why not let those with the most at stake help set the course?"

**– DAVE PEDERSON,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PWELC**

The "co-opetition," cooperative teamwork with a competitive edge, will challenge teams to implement renewable energy and energy efficiency projects in their

communities. The teams' goal will be to achieve the greatest positive social, economic and environmental gains

SEE ENERGY ON PAGE 9 ►

SWIF HOSTING COMMUNITY-BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (C-BED) FORUM

Every year, over \$6 billion leaves our Minnesota economy to pay for the electricity we consume. C-BED enables an increasing portion of that expenditure to instead circulate within the Minnesota economy to produce jobs, tax revenues, community wealth and environmental benefits associated with renewable energy.

As a first step toward supporting C-BED, SWIF is helping gather key stakeholders from southwest Minnesota, including public officials, planners, utility representatives, economic development agencies and anyone with an interest in renewable energy. The Minnesota Department of Commerce is required by statute to hold public meetings as the state studies the opportunities and impacts of dispersing renewable electricity generation. Participants will share their input and hear about current legislation and policies concerning renewable energy development.

A forum will be held September 5th at Southwest Minnesota State University in Marshall. Watch our Web site at www.swifoundation.org for more information, or contact Cheryl Glaeser, SWIF program specialist, at cherylgl@swifoundation.org or (800) 594-9480.



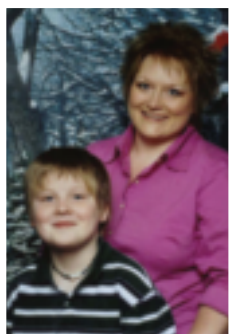
YES!
YOUTH ENERGY SUMMIT

YES! Community Event
Thursday, September 20th
7 p.m. - 9 p.m.
WEAC Auditorium in Willmar
Free and open to the public!

PUT ENERGY INTO OUR FUTURE

CONNECTING THE DOTS

Education is Key for Early Childhood Mental Health



*Carmen and
Cole Cameron*

Imagine it's a warm, sunny, August day. The summer breeze is blowing through the giant shade tree in your yard, and kids are riding their bicycles up and down your street, all of them smiling and having fun. Suddenly, the kids disperse.

"He's always so mean," one says as she pedals for home.

She's not referring to the neighborhood bully. She's talking about a young boy with autism. The children, as well as other neighbors, parents, teachers and community members, are upset and impatient with the boy. They don't realize he has a neurological condition which keeps him from controlling his emotions, recognizing their social cues and reacting appropriately to them, and understanding how to communicate his wants and needs. In turn, the people he encounters credit his behavior to lack of discipline and disrespect.

Carmen Cameron, a mother of three in Hutchinson, doesn't need to imagine this scenario; she lives it. Her 10-year-old son, Cole, has Pervasive Developmental Disorder - Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS), a developmental disorder in the autism family.

"It's the fastest growing disorder but most misunderstood," Carmen said. "It's just now becoming a topic to people."

Cole was originally misdiagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) when he was about 6 years old. He was not correctly diagnosed with PDD-NOS until he was over 7 years old. Carmen said that the shortage of doctors in the area specifically trained in recognizing and treating a child with mental health

concerns creates a major problem, which may lead to an incorrect diagnosis. She also noted that the few professionals who are in this region have extremely long waiting lists, adding to the challenge of identifying and treating children's mental health concerns at the youngest possible age.

"The dots need to be connected. I'm educating myself so I can give Cole the best possible world, give him a chance."

– CARMEN CAMERON

"For an accurate diagnosis, you must seek out a professional," Carmen said. "But the demand has gotten so high; professionals can't keep up with it. We waited over seven years for Cole's diagnosis."

Cole looks like other 10-year-olds, but socially and emotionally he is at a 6-year-old level, and he is intellectually years ahead. When last tested as a fourth grader, his intelligence was around a tenth grade level, and his boredom and frustration during the testing led his doctors to believe he might even be at a collegiate level. This deceiving disparity between delayed social skills and advanced intellect can be very harmful and challenging.

Carmen and her family are very willing to share Cole's story as a way to help others understand the disability and its challenges. She leads an autism support group in Hutchinson, and she was recently named the chair person of the Children's Mental Health Council.

As a member of the McLeod County Thrive action team, the personal experience and knowledge Carmen brings to the planning table will be invaluable in leading the Minnesota Thrive Initiative forward.

As part of their planning process, the team conducted a survey to gather the perceptions of a broad cross-section of community members in

McLeod County with regard to early childhood mental health. The results show a great need for increased understanding of social and emotional development in young children, access to highly trained professionals, appropriate services and reliable support for children with mental health concerns and their families. Decreasing the stigma associated with children's mental health concerns was also identified as an important need in our communities.

We all have a role to play in creating a healthy, supportive environment for our youngest children. Education is essential to understanding, accepting and supporting Cole and other children with mental, social and emotional concerns and equipping them and their families with the care and services they need to be happy children here in southwest Minnesota.

MINNESOTA THRIVE INITIATIVE

*Promoting the Healthy Social and Emotional
Development of Our Youngest Children*

The Minnesota Thrive Initiative is a companion project of the Minnesota Early Childhood Initiative, and receives the majority of its funding from the Bush Foundation. Thrive is dedicated to promoting healthy social and emotional development in young children. SWIF is providing staff leadership and in-kind resources for three years to help the McLeod County action team, southwest Minnesota's pilot team, survey community needs, identify gaps in services and begin implementing projects to meet the mental health needs of the area's youngest children.

For more information, visit www.swifoundation.org/earlychildhood.html, or contact Sara Carlson, sarac@swifoundation.org or (800) 594-9480.

SOUTHWEST INITIATIVE FOUNDATION ADOPTS AN ENTREPRENEURIAL ATTITUDE

Getting Started

In 1960, G.W. "Doc" Schwarz started an archery equipment business in Fulda, Minnesota. His business, Schwarz M.A.A.C., expanded to include fishing and medical equipment and even jewelry. With distributors throughout the country, including well-known names like Cabela's, Schwarz's vision for his company was worth his hard work. However, like many new business owners, he experienced difficulty finding the necessary resources to get started.

"Business is a slow process," Schwarz said. "Research was hard to come by." When starting his business, Schwarz recognized he needed a solid base for his business plan, but found the process for getting the right information complicated. When it came to the basics like setting up a barcode and product packaging, Schwarz didn't know where to go for assistance.

Connecting Resources

Now, nearly 50 years later, Schwarz and other entrepreneurs are still having trouble knowing where to turn for support. Various economic development agencies and higher education institutions offer programs and services, but those involved agree that these resources are often repetitive and disjointed. Entrepreneurs need a clear starting point and a streamlined path for support. This is where the Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF) is stepping in.

Jackie Turner-Lovsness, SWIF program specialist, worked with Don Macke, co-author of *Energizing Entrepreneurs (E2)* and director of RUPRI Center for Rural Entrepreneurship in Lincoln, Nebraska, to create the Entrepreneurship Network Academy, a two-part, two-day workshop to begin the process of building a strong regional network path to support entrepreneurship in southwest Minnesota.

"The timing is really right for this," Macke said. "With SWIF's role as the sustainer, this is leading somewhere." By recognizing existing assets in the region and gaining progressive partners to share SWIF's role and create a game plan, the region won't have to build from zero, but build up from where we are, he said. "It's a shift from a collection of resources to a system of resources."

Regional Participation

Over 70 participants representing all 18 counties of southwest Minnesota including civic leaders, entrepreneurs, lenders, educators and economic development agencies convened for Part One of the Academy in June. Macke and Renae Shields, an independent consultant, co-facilitated information sessions and discussions regarding the opportunities and challenges of entrepreneurship, the economy and their connection to one another. Participants were able to discuss ideas and concerns with people from around the region.



Participants of the first Entrepreneurship Network Academy brainstormed local resources for entrepreneurs in their hometowns.

"Having a network really makes a huge difference," said Duane Hoversten, small business management instructor at Ridgewater College. He said many people do not realize the constant pressures business owners face, so connecting with people who are dealing with the same challenges is very helpful. In regard to economic impact, entrepreneurship clearly plays a large role. "Eighty percent of all jobs today will be created by companies with 20 or fewer employees," Hoversten said. "That's where the job market is really at."

Entrepreneurial Attitude

With this type of market, the need for useful resources and support for entrepreneurs becomes even more evident. "Successful entrepreneurs aren't wild risk takers; they're calculated risk takers," Macke said. "Entrepreneurship takes planning and preparation, but it also creates variety for career and life choices, and forms a creative base for people and businesses to reinvent themselves. The biggest thing that makes entrepreneurship is attitude."

SWIF is taking on that attitude by creating the Entrepreneurship Network Academy, which will eventually lead to a coordinated Business Resource Network. People agree that a unified support system is needed in the region and with the help of individuals and communities, SWIF hopes to determine how to fulfill the need. Continued feedback, discussion and planning throughout the summer will set the stage for Part Two of the Academy on Sept. 19th and 20th. Based on the levels of leadership, engagement and energy throughout the region, plans will be put into place to make southwest Minnesota an even better place for starting, expanding and sustaining a business.

For more information or to register for Part Two of the Academy, please contact Jackie Turner-Lovsness at (800) 594-9480 or jackiet@swifoundation.org.

VALSPAR AND SWIF HELP MAKE MINNESOTA BEAUTIFUL



The six Minnesota Initiative Foundations (MIFs), including the Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF), honored Valspar Corporation with a Valued Partner Award for a decade of helping to beautify Greater Minnesota through the annual Minnesota Beautiful "Picture It Painted" program. Valspar, a Minneapolis-based paint and coatings manufacturer, has donated over 27,000 gallons of its products, benefiting more than 650 communities throughout the state.

"Valspar's ongoing commitment to beautify and preserve many buildings and projects in Greater Minnesota is a wonderful example of good corporate citizenship," said Sherry Ristau, Southwest Initiative Foundation president/CEO. "We are honored to partner with Valspar to bring the Minnesota Beautiful program to our southwest Minnesota communities."

Initiative Foundation presidents present Valspar with a Valued Partner Award. Pictured are (l to r): Tim Penny, Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation; Sherry Ristau, Southwest Initiative Foundation; John Ostrem, Northwest Minnesota Foundation; Gail Leifeld, Valspar; Kathy Gaalswyk, Initiative Foundation; Dick Seitz, Valspar; Tom Renier, Northland Foundation; and Nancy Straw, West Central Initiative.

SWIF and Valspar have partnered to provide grants of paint and coatings to 75 projects in 34 southwest Minnesota communities. Projects have been completed in 16 of the 18 counties in SWIF's service area. This year, the following ten restoration and beautification projects received grants in the region.

Big Stone Arts Council

"Town with a Heart" Mural - Ortonville

This project involves the development of a mural through community visioning and implementation to reflect community history and aesthetics, complementing the town's scenic environment. Many community volunteers and Corn Festival attendees will provide the labor for the project, under the direction of an artist.

Mainstreet Willmar

"Rays of Light" Mural - Willmar

This project involves the replacement of a mural at the new entrance to the Rice Memorial Hospital and the Hospital's planned Healing Garden. The Willmar Design Center Public Art Committee and volunteers, as well as the Youth Downtown Committee and Mainstreet Willmar, will provide the volunteer labor to assist the artist with the project.

Milan Village Arts School

"Country Schoolhouse" - Milan

This project will involve painting the exterior of the building that hosts approximately 40 art classes each year, along with the office and meeting place for the Milan Village Arts School and its related arts activities. The volunteer groups providing labor for this project are the MVAS, community residents, and the Milan Movers.

City of Ivanhoe

"Skating Rinks Warming House" - Ivanhoe

This project involves updating the exterior of the warming house for the ice rink at the city park. The individuals performing the service will be community volunteers.

SEE PROJECTS ON PAGE 10 ►

MEET THE NEW SWIF STAFF!

We are excited to introduce three new staff joining the Southwest Initiative Foundation.

Marc Vaillancourt of Hutchinson is the Southwest Initiative Foundation's new development director. Marc will lead SWIF's development activities, securing financial resources to support the work of the Foundation and promoting philanthropy in southwest Minnesota. He replaces Diana Anderson, who was promoted to chief operating officer. Before coming to SWIF, Vaillancourt was president of the Hutchinson Area Chamber of Commerce, Convention & Visitors Bureau.



Marc Vaillancourt

Karen Grasmon of Olivia was hired as the new communications specialist. She will assist Sarah Libbon, communications officer, with the Foundation's communication and outreach activities. Karen is a recent graduate of Concordia College, Moorhead, where she worked at the Concordia Career Center and Concordia Language Villages. She was also an intern at the Lost and Found Ministry in Moorhead and co-chair for the 2007 Moorhead Colleges Relay For Life.



Karen Grasmon

Kurt Thompson of Redwood Falls was named the Foundation's new micro-enterprise specialist. He will provide technical assistance to SWIF's Micro-Enterprise Loan Program clients, entrepreneurs in southwest Minnesota who are developing small businesses and creating self-employment opportunities. Kurt was the owner and operator of Morgan's Market Fresh Foods in Redwood Falls and brings valuable business experience to the Foundation.



Kurt Thompson



Dan Mahon

Dan Mahon of Silver Lake was a development intern at the Foundation this summer. He compiled extensive research about wealth transfer and the opportunities and challenges it poses, particularly for SWIF's farmland retention program. Dan will be a junior at the University of Notre Dame this fall where he will major in political science with a minor in the Hesburgh Program in Public Service.

► REVOLUTIONS FROM PAGE 1

Peterson stressed the need for long-term visionary thinking, saying, "I worry that more and more leaders are held hostage by short-term considerations. Long-term planning doesn't happen because of short-term management issues. That needs to change."

Peterson's presentation fits with the Southwest Initiative Foundation's recent commitment through its new five-year strategic plan to help the region create a shared vision for regional progress and capacity-building.

"I believe that southwest Minnesota will play a key role for the nation and the world in years to come, leading the way in areas such as renewable energy, food production, natural resource management, and bioscience innovation," said Sherry Ristau, SWIF president/CEO. "It is critically important for area business leaders to hear about these well-founded predictions for global change so they can begin planning for their businesses' and our region's role in meeting future global needs. I believe SWIF can and will continue to help facilitate the region's plans for future economic and social advancement."

BI-PRODUCT FROM FIBROMINN CREATES NEW BUSINESS

**“North American Fertilizer, LLC”
Opens with Loan from SWIF**

The Southwest Initiative Foundation's (SWIF) involvement with economic development and renewable energy takes many different forms. Recently, SWIF supported these priority areas by awarding a loan to “North American Fertilizer, LLC” for the start-up of a fertilizer conversion plant in Benson, Minn. This business is a result of the development occurring with Fibrominn, a Benson power plant fueled by poultry litter. North American Fertilizer will convert a bi-product from Fibrominn's production process into commercial grade fertilizer.

Randy Tersteeg of Olivia is the founder and part owner of North American Fertilizer, LLC. “Through farming, I became interested in this project. “The more research I did, the more interested I became,” Tersteeg said. “I felt it was a great product; we're receiving 100 percent of our starting product from Fibrominn. That's what really makes this project work.”

The business anticipates annually converting over 90,000 tons of Fibrominn's bi-product into 100,000 tons of high-grade fertilizer which contains phosphorus, potassium, sulfur, zinc and other micro nutrients. North American Fertilizer is working with Cargill to market their product to fertilizer dealers.

The loan was awarded through SWIF's Revolving Loan Fund, which supports small business growth throughout the 18-county southwest Minnesota region. SWIF's loan programs, with the exception of the Micro-Enterprise Loan Program, are administered by Prairieland Economic Development Corporation (EDC) of Slayton, Minn. The gap financing loans are intended to compliment, not compete with, traditional lending sources.

VISTA: A RICH HISTORY OF FIGHTING THE WAR ON POVERTY

SWIF Hosts VISTA Volunteer, Lindsay Holtz

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy launched the War on Poverty with his immortal words, “In your hands, my fellow citizens, more than mine, will rest the final success or failure of our course.” President Kennedy didn't live to see his words materialize, but his successor, Lyndon Johnson, carried forth the work that Kennedy began by establishing the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, which created a domestic volunteer program to engage Americans in the fight against poverty – Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA).



Lindsay Holtz

That year, the first 20 VISTA members met with President Johnson at the White House and began a great national effort that is still changing lives and communities today. The work that VISTA volunteers have accomplished is impressive. Programs like Head Start, Upward Bound, neighborhood watches, adult education initiatives, literacy programs, and the establishment of low-cost, accessible health clinics are in existence today thanks to the work of thousands of VISTA volunteers.

The Service Trust Act of 1993 made VISTA part of the new AmeriCorps and placed it within the new federal agency, the Corporation for National & Community Service. Since 2000, the number of VISTA volunteers has reached an all-time high with about 6,000 serving annually.

VISTA is one of the high points in contemporary American history, and its track record for making a difference in the lives of Americans is what led Lindsay Holtz to become a VISTA volunteer. Lindsay will spend her year of service in southwest Minnesota, giving the region an opportunity to benefit directly from VISTA.

Lindsay graduated this spring from Gustavus Adolphus with a double major in history and sociology and a deep desire to help other people. Her goal to someday pursue a career in nonprofit management, combined with opportunities to see firsthand the impact that nonprofits make in people's lives, prompted her to think about VISTA.

Lindsay's decision is not one that many people would take lightly. As President Johnson said to the first group of VISTA members in 1964, “Your pay will be low; the conditions of your labor often will be difficult. But, you will have the satisfaction of leading a great national effort, and you will have the ultimate reward which comes to those who serve their fellow man.”

VISTA members are considered volunteer and receive a modest

SEE POVERTY ON PAGE 9 ►

MONTVIDEO FIRST TO PARTICIPATE IN SWIF'S CONNECTED COMMUNITIES PARTNERSHIP

The Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF) has selected Montevideo to be the pilot community for its brand new Connected Communities Partnership (CCP) program. CCP is a community development program designed to bring leaders and citizens together to identify and prioritize community opportunities based on existing assets, and develop an action plan for

future growth and improvement.

Montevideo will begin its work with SWIF by recruiting a diverse leadership team to participate in the program. Participants will be organized into a core leadership team of approximately 15 members who will fully commit to the work of the program, an advisor team to serve as resources for the core leadership team, and action teams that will later work to implement projects identified in the action plan.

SWIF's Connected Communities Partnership program aims at achieving high-impact outcomes and change

at three levels: individual, team, and community, with an emphasis on community change. High-impact changes will have a substantial effect on the quality of life offered by the community and will be recognizable by both existing residents and potential newcomers.

SWIF will be identifying a community with population of 1,500 or less to serve as its next pilot community in the spring of 2008. For more information, contact Judy Larson, SWIF program director, at judy@swifoundation.org or (800) 594-9480.

► POVERTY FROM PAGE 8

living allowance and their choice of a year-end stipend or an education award at the end of their service. Lindsay shared her perspective when she said, "This job does pay a lot, just not in the monetary sense. I will have the opportunity to work with people and organizations that I might never have had the chance to if it weren't for VISTA."

While in service through VISTA, Lindsay will work as a Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration (MAVA) community outreach coordinator. MAVA is sponsoring Lindsay's position and the Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF) is serving as her host organization. Lindsay will spend 80 percent of her time working for MAVA to expand and support their Volunteer Resources Leadership project and to increase opportunities for volunteerism. The remaining 20 percent of her time will be spent working with SWIF initiatives to expand the Junior Achievement program in southwest Minnesota, and develop an "appreciative inquiry" tool to help communities understand their history and connect generations.

SWIF is proud to play a part in bringing VISTA to southwest Minnesota. Lindsay's work will undoubtedly leave a lasting mark on the region and will add yet another thread to the rich tapestry of VISTA projects that have served to fight poverty for over 40 years.

► ENERGY FROM PAGE 3

through their projects. Participating teams will meet to work on their projects through Earth Day 2008, with the guidance of their mentor/coach and PWELC staff.

This year's Summit can accommodate 16 youth teams and as of July 30th, 12 teams have registered, including Benson, Canby, New London-Spicer, Paynesville, Redwood Falls, New Century Charter School in Hutchinson, Dawson-Boyd, Maynard-Clara City-Raymond (MACCRAY), Montevideo, Morris, Willmar and Milan.

On the evening of September 20th, an event open to the public will be held at the WEAC Auditorium in Willmar. This community event will feature speaker J. Drake Hamilton, science policy director for Fresh Energy, as well as award-winning musician Michael Monroe, who lives and records his music in a solar-powered log cabin on Lake Superior. Young people participating in an "appreciative inquiry" project through Clean Up the River Environment (CURE) will also share their interviews with older people in the region who remember the start of electrical cooperatives in southwest Minnesota.

School Energy Projects

Schools spend more on energy than on computers and textbooks combined. The increase in energy prices and predictions for future increases has created a renewed interest in energy conservation and renewable energy opportunities in schools. In addition, school districts play a major role in educating and bringing the community together.

There is great benefit in having schools set examples for their communities by using renewable energy and implementing energy conservation measures. SWIF will connect schools with strategies, resources and support to implement energy programs and develop renewable energy projects.

Renewable Energy Education and Career Awareness

SWIF will connect the region's current and future workforce to career opportunities in renewable energy by aligning and enhancing education and training resources.

The Foundation will also work with higher education institutions to market their renewable energy programs. Together, education, economic development, workforce development and industry will work to build paths to renewable energy careers.

► PROJECTS FROM PAGE 6

**Lac qui Parle County Historical Society
“Museum Outbuildings Spruce-Up” - Madison**

This project involves the restoration of three buildings at the Museum; a schoolhouse, the Robert Bly Study, and a small gas station. The Madison Kiwanis Club and Lac qui Parle Historical Society will provide the volunteer labor for the project.

**Chippewa County Historical Society
“Historic Chippewa City” - Montevideo**

This project will preserve the exterior of the Chippewa Bank Building and the Ness House as a part of a late 1800's village setting museum. Klein Bank and Chippewa County Historical Society volunteers have committed to providing the volunteer labor for the project.

**Meeker County Parks Department
“Forest City Stockade” - Litchfield**

This project involves preserving the exterior of three log buildings that were donated to the Stockade. They were originally constructed around 1870 and include a general store, country school, and a chapel. The Stockade Committee will provide the volunteer labor for this project.

**City of Morton
“Community Center” - Morton**

This project will provide paint for the interior and exterior of the Morton City Hall and Community Center. This is part of an overall plan to beautify downtown Morton. The volunteer groups providing labor for this project are the Morton Area Chamber, Lion's Club, Fire Department, and Birch Coulee 4H Club.

**Murray County
“Murray County Fairgrounds” - Slayton**

This project will provide paint for the exterior on the round barn and grandstand at the fairgrounds. The round barn is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Community volunteers will be providing labor for this project.

**Jackson County Fair Association
“Fair Village Beautification” - Jackson**

This project is to preserve and beautify the Fair Village, an area depicting Jackson County of the past. Both interior and exterior surfaces will be painted. The volunteer groups providing labor for this project are the 4H Clubs of Jackson County, Sentence to Serve, the Lions, and Kiwanis.

SWIF AWARDS OVER \$80,000 IN REGIONAL IMPACT GRANTS

Although most of the Southwest Initiative Foundation's (SWIF) funding is guided by our key initiatives, we also award Regional Impact Grants to support unique, innovative projects that demonstrate exceptional leadership and partnerships in southwest Minnesota. These projects are chosen by the Foundation's Board of Directors and staff and the amount available for funding varies from year to year. The following Regional Impact Grants were recently awarded:

Ridgewater College Foundation, Willmar

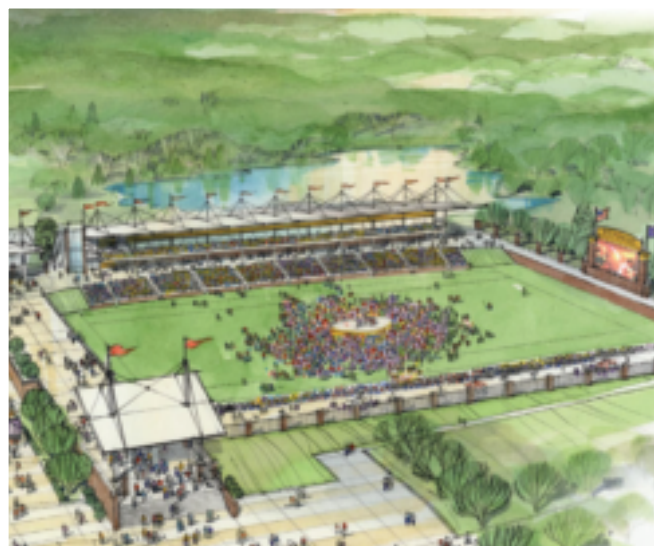
\$25,000 to support a traveling, simulation-based laboratory for health care education.

Rice Memorial Hospital, Willmar

\$6,500 to assist in the development of the Rice Regional Dental Clinic, which provides dental care for uninsured and underserved residents in southwest Minnesota, promotes careers in dentistry and engages dentists in public service.

**Southwest Minnesota State University
Foundation, Marshall**

\$50,000 to support the design and construction of the Southwest Minnesota Regional Event Center on the SMSU campus.



SMSU's new regional event center will host athletic events, speakers, conferences, trade shows, concerts and other large regional gatherings.

PLANNED GIVING RESOURCES ON OUR NEW WEB SITE

In an effort to keep all of our supporters up-to-date on current issues involving estate planning and planned giving, the Southwest Initiative Foundation has included a planned giving section on our new Web site. The planned giving pages can be found by clicking "Giving Options" and then "Planned Giving" at www.swifoundation.org.

The Planned Giving section is a comprehensive resource for all of your gift planning questions. Discover all of the tax and income benefits of the various kinds of planned gifts. Read in-depth about trust and annuities that pay you an income for life; how you can make gifts from life insurance policies, retirement plan assets or appreciated property; and how to set up your will so that the government does not benefit more than your heirs.

We also provide a glossary of planned giving terms, so you don't get confused by unfamiliar terms. If you are wondering how a gift will

work for you, calculate your income tax deduction for a specific plan with our gift calculator. Discover a virtual encyclopedia of information on how and what to give!



WORK IN PROGRESS

The Southwest Initiative Foundation supports community and economic advancement in southwest Minnesota through various initiatives and programs. We are pleased to report the following grant and loan activity for the six-month period of January 1, 2007 through June 30, 2007.

Grant Awards

124 grants totaling \$625,704 through SWIF's grant initiatives and its community and designated funds.

Loan Awards

17 loans totaling \$888,620 to support the start-up or expansion of businesses in southwest Minnesota through SWIF's loan programs, including the Micro-Enterprise Loan Program.



SAVE THE DATE!

November 8, 2007

SOUTHWEST
INITIATIVE
FOUNDATION

Banquet

New Location

SOUTHWEST MINNESOTA
STATE UNIVERSITY
Marshall, Minnesota

ROB SAUNDERS OF BIRD ISLAND JOINS SWIF BOARD

Saunders brings accounting and financial planning expertise to SWIF board



Rob Saunders – Bird Island, MN

Rob Saunders of Bird Island, Minn., was recently welcomed to the Southwest Initiative Foundation's (SWIF) Board of Directors. Saunders is a senior partner at Saunders Mertens Schmitz, P.A., Certified Public Accountants and owner of Island Financial Planning, Inc., in Bird Island.

"The community of southwestern Minnesota has been very good to my family through education, business opportunities, and lifestyle," said Saunders. "This is my opportunity to give back, and I can't think of a better vehicle to impact southwestern Minnesota than the Southwest Initiative Foundation. The issues of SWIF are my issues; business, early childhood, aging and diversity. I look forward to making a difference through SWIF."

CONNECT

OUR MISSION:

TO BE A CATALYST, FACILITATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL GROWTH BY DEVELOPING AND CHALLENGING LEADERS TO BUILD ON THE REGION'S ASSETS.

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