

CONNECT

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



SPRING 2007

**NEW LOAN OPTIONS
AVAILABLE**

CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

VOICES OF IMMIGRANTS

**OUR OPEN HOUSE:
A DAY TO REMEMBER**

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SUCCESSFUL FOUNDATION**

MINNESOTA THRIVE INITIATIVE

INSERT: SWIF DONOR LIST

Photo courtesy of the Worthington Daily Globe.

Lizbeth Campillo, owner of El Estilo Vaquero (The Cowboy Style), is the spokesperson for the new Latino business group in Worthington.

LATINO BUSINESS GROUP MAKES HISTORY IN WORTHINGTON

**Southwest Initiative Foundation Hispanic business
consultant, Adolfo Avila, assists Latino business owners**



Hispanic business owners met with the Worthington Chamber of Commerce to discuss membership and opportunities to work together.

Arms raised in jubilation – whoops and hollers – pats on the back – people shaking hands and smiles everywhere. It may sound like a sports team winning a game or a Nascar driver and his crew at the end of a race, but it's actually what happened at a Chamber of Commerce meeting in Worthington last month.

The spontaneous celebration occurred when a newly-created Latino business group in Worthington met with members of the Worthington Chamber of Commerce at a meeting facilitated by Rep. Rod Hamilton, R-Mountain Lake, to begin the process of becoming Chamber members. What might be a fairly

routine event for many entrepreneurs was far from routine to the Latino business owners. It was a historical moment and a dream come true. "Now we have a voice and can speak as a group," said Juan Palma, owner of Palma Customs, an automotive detailing and customizing business. Lizbeth Campillo, owner of El Estilo Vaquero (The Cowboy Style) in Worthington, added, "It will be easier now to get business information in our own language."

The Latino business group formed with the leadership of Adolfo Avila, a Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF) Hispanic business consultant. Avila has been providing business training and facilitation services to Hispanic business owners for nearly three years as part of the SWIF's Micro-Loan Program. His services have extended beyond the scope of just the SWIF's loan recipients to include the larger Hispanic business community in southwest Minnesota.

"A lot of things are changing as a

SEE LATINO GROUP ON PAGE 3 ►

A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT/CEO



*Sherry Ristau
President/CEO*

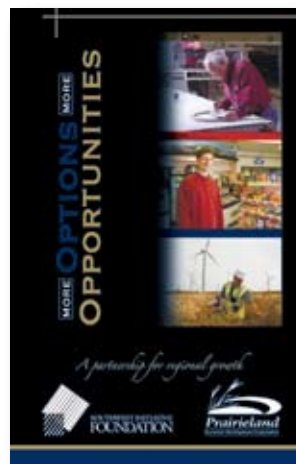
The snow is melting and dripping off the roof outside my window, birds are singing, and the first buds are beginning to show on the bare tree limbs in my yard. All of these things are reminders that spring is on the way.

This is the time of year that reminds me of my first entrepreneurial experience when I was ten years old. I hauled out my bike, slung a heavy bag of newspapers over my shoulder and pedaled down the road delivering papers. I fought off dogs, did "collecting" and even helped elderly customers with odd jobs. I was one of the first girls in my community to have my own paper route -- a fact that I was reminded of every time I won contests for signing up new customers for the newspaper. With great pride and anticipation, I'd go to collect my prize...but it was always a racetrack, a football, or some other prize geared for boys. How disappointing!

That experience may have been one of the first times that I felt different or left out. It makes me think about the article in this newsletter of the Worthington Hispanic business owners. They have overcome so many challenges and obstacles, and now they are being recognized as part of the mainstream business community. What a wonderful story! I am proud of the role the Foundation has played in their success.

This newsletter is full of stories about our work and all of the new initiatives being launched -- the Connected Communities Initiative, the new business support network through our Entrepreneurship Initiative, the Early Childhood Mental Health Initiative, and so much more! On top of all that, we have been busy organizing ourselves internally to accomplish all of our goals to advance and support southwest Minnesota.

Spring has sprung at the Southwest Initiative Foundation, and I look forward to a new season of connecting, promoting and advancing this great part of the state!



**Foundation adds
Renewable Energy,
Regional Centers, and
Small Communities
Loan Programs**

NEW LOAN OPTIONS AVAILABLE

The Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF) has expanded its loan programs to help sustain and grow businesses and support community development projects by introducing three new loan pools:

- The Renewable Energy Loan Program offers loans to businesses engaged in renewable energy activities, whether directly or indirectly, that help build the renewable energy industry in the 18 counties of southwest Minnesota.
- The Regional Centers Loan Program recognizes the importance of supporting business growth in regional center communities to the overall economic vitality of the southwest Minnesota region. The program focuses on business ventures in the communities of Hutchinson, Marshall, Willmar and Worthington that contribute to regional economic growth.
- The Small Communities Loan Program offers loans in communities with populations of less than 1,500 for community-based projects that support and enhance the vitality of the community.

In addition to these new loan options, the SWIF will continue to offer loans through its Revolving Loan Fund, Intermediary Relending Program (IRP), and Micro-Enterprise Loan Program. SWIF's loan programs, with the exception of the Micro-Enterprise Loan Program, are administered by our partner, PrairieLand Economic Development Corporation. This partnership with PrairieLand EDC gives our loan clients an expanded base of expertise and options.

To request a brochure about the SWIF's loan programs or speak to a staff member, contact us at (800) 594-9480 or send an e-mail message to info@swifoundation.org.

CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

Southwest Initiative Foundation prepares to launch a new program
focused on community and leadership development



John McKnight, professor at Northwestern University in Chicago, presents his Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) model to a group at the SWIF office.

When the Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF) surveyed people throughout the region about what its key areas of emphasis should be in the coming five years, it received a resounding message that leadership and community development are vitally

important for regional growth. The board and staff heard those voices and committed to a five-year goal of helping leaders improve their communities.

The SWIF's new program is called the Connected Communities Initiative (CCI), and it focuses on leadership and capacity-building for individuals, communities, and the southwest Minnesota region. The goal of the CCI is to equip community members with knowledge, skills, and connections to help them create communities where growing numbers of people choose to live, work, and retire.

As a first step to develop the program, SWIF hosted a two-day Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) training at its Hutchinson office for regional leaders and the entire SWIF staff. The instructor was John L. McKnight, professor of communication studies and co-director of the Asset-Based Community Development Institute for Policy Research at Northwestern University in Chicago, IL. Participants learned about the principles of the ABCD model and how to put it to use in their own life, the life of their community,

"In a time when we work too hard, are too stressed, and barely have time to take care of ourselves, I think this program is both timely and excellent. It will teach us to take care of each other, and in the end, not only will we be a healthy community economically, we will ourselves become healthy socially, emotionally, spiritually, and physically.

Thank you for leading the way and stepping outside the box. I think whether everyone realizes it or not, this is not just a tool for community development, it's a human development tool as well. After all, isn't that where the map starts – with the people?"

- Lori Evenstad, executive director of the Montevideo Area Chamber of Commerce and ABCD training participant

and the region as a whole.

Watch for more information as SWIF uses the knowledge gained from McKnight and his ABCD model to pilot its new Connected Communities Initiative.

► LATINO GROUP FROM PAGE 1

result of this group's work," said Avila. "Much of this is a positive outcome of the immigration raids in Worthington. This group will bring the whole community together and help improve the level of trust. They want to be an example to other communities."

All of this is music to the ears of SWIF board and staff. The Foundation has been working for quite some time alongside its partners, the Small Business Development Center in Marshall and the Minneapolis-based Latino Economic Development Center, to provide leadership and resources to the region's newest residents. SWIF has provided loans and business assistance to six Hispanic-owned businesses in the

Worthington area and has several more loan applications in process. Currently, there are 21 Hispanic-owned businesses in Worthington. Benny Berger, SWIF Micro-Enterprise program officer, said, "That meeting at the Worthington Chamber was one of the highlights of my work at the Foundation. I thought to myself, 'Yes! This is what it's all about.'"

Berger isn't the only one excited about the progress being made in Worthington. Several news stations have picked up the story, including KEYC TV in Mankato, which is doing a series of stories on the Hispanic businesses in Worthington. Adolfo Avila and the Hispanic business owners are also receiving phone calls from higher education institutions and other organizations interested in their work and how to replicate it.

Avila says the Latino business group

is currently working on an official name and mission statement, and hopes more Hispanic business owners will join. The group has goals of improving communication between the Hispanic and Anglo citizens, as well as between Hispanic business owners. It will also work to help business owners improve their sales margins, which dropped dramatically following the immigration sweep in December.

The new business group will continue to meet separately from the Chamber, so that members can speak in their native language, but they will also meet with the Worthington Chamber members once a month. Lizbeth Campillo, Worthington business owner for 12 years, has agreed to be the spokesperson for the group, offering her business experience and ability to speak fluent English to help other Latino entrepreneurs succeed.



OUR OPEN HOUSE

A DAY TO REMEMBER

October 30th was a special day at the Southwest Initiative Foundation as over 200 people joined us for an Open House to celebrate the opening of our new office building in Hutchinson. Friends and colleagues from all around the region and beyond made the journey to celebrate the completion of this permanent resource for the Foundation and the people of southwest Minnesota. Guests enjoyed tours, presentations, refreshments, a flag raising ceremony, and much more.



If you haven't had a chance to see the building, stop by any time you're in the area – you're always welcome. And don't forget that our conference room is available for meetings and presentations!

THE CORNERSTONE OF A SUCCESSFUL FOUNDATION

SWIF's endowment is central to its strategic, long-range plan for sustainability

Every foundation is built upon an endowment, and the Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF) is no different. But, what is an endowment? And why is it important for the SWIF?

Although there is no single legal definition of an endowment, the most commonly accepted meaning is a fund which is kept in perpetuity to provide an ongoing stream of revenue generated by the investment of principal. That may still seem confusing, so more simply put, an endowment is like a savings account. The principal is invested and never spent – only the income is used for programs and operating expenses.

The SWIF's \$23 million endowment currently provides about one-third, or \$380,000, of the Foundation's annual

operating budget. The stronger the endowment, the more time and financial resources are available to invest in programs and initiatives that strengthen southwest Minnesota.

Gifts to the SWIF General Endowment are unrestricted, which allows the greatest flexibility to respond to the future needs and opportunities of the region. Building the endowment is central to the Foundation's strategic, long-range plan for sustainability. In fact, the growth of the endowment is so critical to the Southwest Initiative Foundation and for the region that The McKnight Foundation has pledged up to \$4.5 million in the form of another challenge grant through 2011. This is an exciting opportunity for this great part of the state!

We hope that you will support the

Southwest Initiative Foundation's General Endowment, knowing that your gift will be matched dollar-for-dollar by The McKnight Foundation, and put to work in the best possible way for the 18 counties of southwest Minnesota. Gifts of all types and sizes are needed and deeply appreciated as we work toward our goal of securing the full matching grant amount from McKnight.

There is even a donation envelope enclosed in this edition of our newsletter for your convenience, or you can visit www.swifoundation.org/donate and make your gift online using our secure Web site. As we continue to grow this resource to help respond to the changing needs of southwest Minnesota, we look forward to your partnership now and in the coming years.

DIANA ANDERSON PROMOTED TO CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER



Diana Anderson, COO

The Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF) is pleased to announce that Diana Anderson, SWIF development director, has been promoted to chief operating officer (COO). In this newly-created position, Diana will provide leadership and oversight to the SWIF's internal operations and functions. She will lead the Foundation's strategic planning process, provide management team leadership and oversight, and

oversee program design and execution.

As part of the organizational change, Sherry Ristau will assume responsibilities as president/CEO, devoting more of her time to external relationships and regional leadership.

"I couldn't be more pleased to officially name Diana Anderson as our new chief operating officer," said Sherry Ristau, SWIF president/CEO. "Diana has done an outstanding job as our development director for the past six years. That experience, combined

with her background in hospital administration, has prepared her well to assume her new role as COO. Diana embodies all of the Foundation's core values and demonstrates the highest degree of professionalism and integrity in all she does."

Diana and her family will be relocating from Canby to Hutchinson. She will assume her new responsibilities as COO on April 9, 2007. Diana may be contacted with questions regarding donor services until a new development director is named.

WELCOME NEW SWIF STAFF!

We are excited to announce the addition of two new staff at the Southwest Initiative Foundation.

Deb Berggren of Hutchinson joined the Southwest Initiative Foundation in late December as the accounting assistant. Deb has an associate's degree in accounting from Ridgewater College and more than 16 years of experience in the accounting field, performing duties ranging from accounts payable and accounts receivable to company payroll. She was most recently employed at AgriTrading in Hutchinson.

Brad Kramer of Tracy was recently hired as program specialist for the Early Childhood Initiative (ECI). The activities of the ECI have grown with 11 coalition communities in southwest Minnesota working to ensure that all of our youngest children thrive, and have a healthy life of learning, achieving, and succeeding. Brad has a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Dakota State University and was most recently employed as assistant director and lead teacher at Discovery Center Preschool and Daycare in Marshall.

WORK IN PROGRESS

The Southwest Initiative Foundation provides financial resources for community and economic advancement in southwest Minnesota. We are pleased to report the following activity for the six-month period of July 1, 2006 through December 31, 2006.

Grant Awards

81 grants totaling over \$538,000 through the SWIF's grant initiatives and its community and component funds.

Loan Awards

Over \$503,000 to support business start-ups or expansions through SWIF loan programs, including the Micro-Loan Program.



Deb Berggren



Brad Kramer

STEP UP YOUR BUSINESS

Entrepreneurs often feel isolated with no one to turn to with the tough day-to-day business decisions that are part of owning a business. Thanks to a new support network convened by the Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF), that will no longer be the case for a group of business owners in the Hutchinson area.

The business support network, called "Step Up Your Business," will meet on a monthly basis and offer business owners a forum to support one another in an atmosphere of trust through the ups and downs of business ownership. The professionally-facilitated group will also hear from guest speakers and engage in individual and group goal setting.

The business support network concept is being piloted in Hutchinson in partnership with the Hutchinson Area Chamber of Commerce, Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Minnesota Workforce Center and Ridgewater College, and SWIF has plans to replicate the model in other communities. It's all part of SWIF's Entrepreneurship Initiative, a program that seeks to provide entrepreneurs with the appropriate resources to create strong, successful businesses.

Small business owners also have an opportunity to consult with a small business development specialist on the first Wednesday of every month at the SWIF's Hutchinson office. The consultations are offered free of charge through a partnership between SWIF and the Small Business Development Center. The consultant is available from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. and appointments can also be arranged at different times by contacting (800) 642-0684, ext. 7386. In addition, pre-venture classes and Going into Business classes are offered in Hutchinson through a three-way partnership of SWIF, SBDC, and Ridgewater College.

VOICES OF IMMIGRANTS

**Documentary film features the life stories of
Worthington area immigrants**

The life stories of immigrants living in Worthington are featured in the documentary film, "Voices of Immigrants." A premiere showing of the film was held on March 11th in Worthington. The concept for the film, which was spearheaded by the Nobles County Integration Collaborative, was a direct outcome of an Intergenerational Train the Trainer series that was funded by the Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF). SWIF also provided funding for the production of the documentary film.

The goal of the film is to help promote communication and understanding among cultures and help people understand the personal journey of immigrants living in the region. The Collaborative hopes that other communities will use the film to promote discussion and integration. Copies of the film can be purchased for \$12 from the Nobles County Integration Collaborative by calling (507) 376-3300.



These people, who attended the premiere showing, were featured in the documentary film.



The premiere showing of the film created an opportunity for Worthington community members to get to know each other better.

MINNESOTA THRIVE INITIATIVE

New program focuses on early childhood mental health

For many people, early childhood mental health is an entirely new concept. The idea that many children ages birth to 5 are in need of mental health services is definitely of concern to everyone. But, the fact is that the Minnesota Early Childhood Initiative's work in 64 communities across the state of Minnesota has revealed an urgent and compelling need to help Greater Minnesota's communities strengthen resources to support the social and emotional well-being of infants, toddlers, preschoolers and their families.

Early childhood mental health refers to the developing capacity of a child from birth to five to experience, regulate, and express emotions; to form close and secure interpersonal relationships; and explore the environment and learn. The six Minnesota Initiative Foundations (MIF) have received a three-year grant from the Bush Foundation to implement a new initiative to promote the healthy social and emotional development of Minnesota's youngest citizens.

The new initiative, called the "Minnesota Thrive Initiative," has two primary goals:

- Establish a pilot site action team in each MIF region
- Create a statewide learning community as a place to exchange information and best practices and contribute to overarching statewide early childhood mental health system-building efforts

The Southwest Initiative Foundation has selected Hutchinson as the site for the "Thrive" pilot action team in southwest Minnesota. In just a few short months, 52 people have

MINNESOTA THRIVE INITIATIVE

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

MINNESOTA INITIATIVE FOUNDATIONS

become involved with the action team and the group is working on surveying community members and mapping service resources to identify strengths and needs. The interest and energy that this group is generating is further evidence of the need for young children and their families to receive quality early childhood mental health services and resources.

For more information about the Early Childhood Initiative and its newest venture, "Thrive," contact Sara Carlson, SWIF program officer at (800) 594-9480 or via e-mail at sarac@swifoundation.org.

NEW REPORT STUDIES MINNESOTA EARLY CHILDHOOD INITIATIVE

The Minnesota Early Childhood Initiative (MECI) was the subject of a recent study by the State Early Childhood Policy Technical Assistant Network's (SECPTAN) Build Initiative. The report, which was conducted by researchers from Harvard University, studies early childhood initiatives in six states – Colorado, Iowa, Minnesota, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Vermont – and seeks to answer the question, "What is the role for community planning, decision-making, resource allocation, and ongoing administration and quality insurance in developing early learning systems?"

The fact that MECI was featured in this report is a wonderful affirmation of the work being accomplished on behalf of our youngest children by the Southwest Initiative Foundation and the other Minnesota Initiative Foundations, The McKnight Foundation, Ready 4K, local early childhood coalitions, and the other MECI participants and funders.

For a copy of the "Beyond Parallel Play" report, contact the Southwest Initiative Foundation at (800) 594-9480.

SWIF ANNUAL REPORT



The Southwest Initiative Foundation's 2006 On-Line Annual Report is now available for viewing at www.swifoundation.org/2006report. The annual report not only reflects our activities in 2006, it also provides a historic perspective of all we have achieved together during the past 20 years. Log on and view an interactive timeline, video clips, grants and loans listings, financial statements, and much more!

GARY GEIGER JOINS BOARD

Geiger brings wealth of experience in business,
finance, and community-building



Gary Geiger — Willmar, MN

The Southwest Initiative Foundation recently welcomed Gary Geiger to its Board of Trustees. Gary is chairman of the board and president of Heritage Bancshares Group, Inc. and chairman/ chief executive officer of Heritage Bank N.A. – Willmar, Spicer, Raymond and Pennoch.

Gary is active in his community, currently serving as director of the Willmar Design Center, chairman of the Gateway Transportation and Parking Committee, chairman of Bethel Lutheran Church Downtown Ministry Committee, chairman of the Airport Taskforce of the Economic Development Commission, a member of the Economic Development Commission's Business Retention Committee, and serving on several committees of the Minnesota Bankers Association.

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.

THIS NEWSLETTER IS

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