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FOUNDATION

Here for good.

Investing in
Children When
They Need Us



Cradle-to-Career
Support



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the wilder foundation

impact

newsletter

News for friends and supporters about the impact and

progress of Wilder's work

Summer 2011

Graduating with Honor

Kofi Services Celebrates 20 Years of Uplifting Youth in Need

On a cool evening in early June, 18 young men stir in their seats next to a stage, anxiously waiting for a graduation ceremony to begin. It's a typical scene for this time of year, except this graduation is different: instead of lining up to receive diplomas, these young men slip on Kofi jackets to commemorate their completion of the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation's Kofi Services.

Derived from a word meaning "child of growth" in Akan Asente, Kofi Services is a culturally specific, school-based mental health program for African American youth in grades 3–8 experiencing difficulty in school, personal relationships or other areas of their lives. Kofi counselors work closely with youth and their families to improve students' behaviors and to increase parental involvement in their child's education. Thanks to your help, Kofi served over 100 youth in seven Saint Paul schools this year in partnership with Ramsey County Human Services and the Saint Paul School District.

2011 marks the 20th anniversary for Kofi Services, a landmark not often achieved in the field of human services. Kofi's long-term success lies in its ability to get at the root of behavioral and academic issues through culturally specific mentorship, skills building, counseling and support.

The formula works: the most recent evaluation conducted by Wilder Research revealed that 88 percent of Kofi participants demonstrated improved mental health status on standardized clinical behavior tests after receiving Kofi Services.

above: Proud Kofi graduates wearing their new jackets.

(continued inside)

Why I Give to Kofi

"The whole premise of Kofi is what I love. Giving these kids



full-time guidance, discipline and encouragement at such a young age gives them the skills and self-confidence to become great men and women."

Dr. Kyle Edlund, DDS, has served as a clinical instructor at the University of Minnesota, treated home-bound and nursing home patients and is an official team dentist for the Minnesota Wild, the Saint Paul Saints and the Minnesota Swarm. Dr. Edlund designates his Wilder Foundation gift to Kofi Forever; an endowment fund to ensure that African American youth receive culturally appropriate mental health services in times of need.

"At a Kofi Graduation, you know you are part of something special when you see the self-confidence and pride these young people have developed," said Dr. Edlund.

Investing in Children When They Need Us Most

An Emphasis on Early Intervention Leads to a Brighter Future For Vulnerable Youth

At age five, Chia started kindergarten, a bright-eyed Hmong girl with her entire life ahead of her. She didn't know how to speak English. She had never experienced a structured learning environment. She closed herself off to her classmates and teachers.

Chia's story is not unique. Too many children enter kindergarten without the preparation they need to succeed. Lack of quality early childhood education is one of the most significant challenges facing children, especially children from low-income and non-English speaking households. Children without adequate preparation enter school facing substantial barriers to academic achievement that can quickly become lifelong challenges.

Investing early in youth, especially those most at risk of social adjustment challenges, has a lasting impact on children, families and the entire community. At Wilder's Child Development Center, children are nurtured by qualified and caring staff, and participate in a curriculum that emphasizes multi-cultural and multi-sensory activities that promote readiness for school. The Child Development Center promotes the social, emotional, cognitive and physical development of young children, particularly those who show early adjustment problems that could interfere with learning.

Serving low-income families, the Child Development Center is an important community resource for closing the achievement gap. Children from at-risk families are less likely to have access to quality care and more likely to enter kindergarten facing significant barriers to social and cognitive development.

Parents and families are an integral element of the Child Development Center curriculum. Monthly



Child Associate Jackie Milton digs into the sandbox with a Primary Project client in the specially equipped playroom.

Primary Project OVERVIEW

Play therapy for children experiencing school-adjustment issues at a young age

Number of children served: 100/year

Ages served: Preschool through third grade

Locations: North End Elementary, John A. Johnson Elementary, Dayton's Bluff Elementary

Check out wilder.org for more information about Primary Project.

family activities, family resources and support are integrated into the curriculum to promote positive family functioning and support the development of the child.

Beyond the Child Development Center, Wilder's Incredible Years program offers children age 2–8 and their parents and teachers the opportunity to work jointly to promote emotional and social competence and to prevent, reduce and treat children's behavioral and emotional problems. Combined, these two family-centric programs provide support for families of children at vulnerable developmental stages.

Yet many children are not fortunate enough to begin their learning journey with the opportunity to participate in programs such as those offered by the Child Development Center. Those children, like Chia, enter kindergarten each year in critical need of support. It's not too late for these children.

Wilder's Primary Project, a partnership with St. Paul Public Schools, is a school-based early intervention program for children at risk of school adjustment problems. The highly successful research-based program addresses social adjustment problems early on to minimize problems that are known to affect children in later school achievement and in life.

Chia's teacher referred Chia to Primary Project as a "selective mute." In school, Chia was painfully shy; she had little to no communication with her classmates or with adults in the school. *(continued)*

Investing in Children When They Need Us Most *(continued)*

Each week, Chia and a Primary Project “Child Associate” engaged in one-on-one child-led expressive play therapy to build a positive adult connection and help bolster confidence.

For twelve weeks, Chia met with her Child Associate. When they first met, Chia made no eye contact and used no words or facial expressions. There was no interaction. Through incremental improvements, Chia began to find her voice. Toward the end of the twelve weeks, Chia was playing in every session and voicing things on her own. Chia’s progress was also seen in her classroom where, for the first time ever, Chia voiced the letters in her name.

Primary Project is proven to deliver measurable school success outcomes. A recent evaluation of the three schools where Wilder delivers Primary Project showed statistically significant student improvement in all measurement areas: task orientation, assertiveness, behavior control and peer

sociability. These outcomes are critical skills for a child’s success in school.

Primary Project is one of the most successful school-based programs for preschool through third grade children with school adjustment concerns and costs very little to

deliver. An investment in early intervention is an effective and inexpensive way to make a difference. For a little more than \$1,000 per child, Primary Project helps young children build

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■
For the first time ever,
Chia voiced the
letters in her name

skills for success now that they can use for a lifetime. To learn how you can help a child succeed through Primary Project, call 651-280-2445.

Your Name Here

Named Endowment Funds Touch Lives Now and Into The Future

On March 24, seven Wilder Foundation employees were selected as the first class of Kingston Fellows, receiving a combined \$25,000 to help them study, teach, conduct research, exchange ideas and develop innovative programs to address community concerns.

The Kingston Fellowship Fund was established one year ago with gifts totaling \$1,080,000 in honor of President Emeritus, Tom Kingston, upon his retirement from Wilder

Foundation. The purpose of the Fund is to develop a highly effective, culturally competent set of leaders and promote ongoing improvement of human services in the entire community. This first class of Fellows will apply their awards to advanced degree tuition, licensure costs

and other expenses associated with

furthering their human services work. “The Kingston Fellowship will allow me to gain the skills I need to help more families at Wilder and in the community,” said Ka Moua Lo, Bilingual Family Therapist.

Named endowment funds like the Kingston Fellowship Fund make an impact year after year. Imagine the legacy you could create with a current or future gift of \$10,000 or more. For information on creating an endowment fund in your name, contact Marcia Yanz, Senior Gift Planner, at 651-280-2469 or marcia.yanz@wilder.org.



Marcia Yanz



2011 Kingston Fellows (left to right): Thomas Nguyen, Ka Moua Lo, Jeanelle Foster, Saran Cryer, Leonard Cain, Larry Yang and Mae Brooks.

Cradle-to-Career Support

About Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood

Saint Paul is one of 21 communities across the nation selected to receive a Promise Neighborhood planning grant from the United States Department of Education. The Promise Neighborhood effort was inspired by the Harlem Children's Zone in New York City—a community-based, interlocking network of services for children from birth through college—which has received national acclaim for its success in closing the achievement gap. The Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood is an effort to ensure all children succeed in school and life through receiving cradle-to-career educational, family and community resources and support.

The Promise Neighborhood is comprised of a 250-block area in the Summit-University and Frogtown neighborhoods of Saint Paul. Promise Neighborhood Partners include City of Saint Paul, Frogtown Neighborhood Association, Ramsey County, Saint Paul Public Schools, Saint Paul Public Schools Foundation, Summit University Planning Council, the YWCA of Saint Paul and the Wilder Foundation. Committed to systems change, the partners and Solution Action Groups made up of residents, service providers, educators and others are developing a new model to transform the way the community comes together to identify and meet kids' needs by integrating: rigorous, high quality in-school and out-of-school learning time; and educational, family and community resources and supports.

A comprehensive community survey of 700 households in the Frogtown and Summit-University neighborhoods was conducted this spring. On May 5, over 200 community-minded residents gathered at the Wilder Center to hear the results and to discuss solutions to address the issues.

For more information visit www.wilder.org.

“Educating children in this rapidly changing, globally competitive world requires new ways to approach education. The Promise Neighborhood can be the beginning of an amazing journey.”
—*Charles Ellis, Promise Neighborhood Solution Action Group Chair*

“The vision for what this community can and should become must come from the residents, business owners, parents, teachers, youth and community leaders who call the Promise Neighborhood area home. Their involvement is integral to ensuring that kids have the tools they need to succeed in school and in life.”
—*Chris Coleman, Mayor of Saint Paul*

By-the-Numbers

19%

Promise Neighborhood 9th grade students in Saint Paul Public Schools who meet or exceed state math standards

Caregivers who feel their 15–18 year-old student is not safe either at school and/or traveling to and from school

27%

45%

Children 6–11 who could not enroll in school-related activities or out-of-school programs because of the cost

Addressing the Issues: Ideas from the Community Conversation

Provide mentoring programs for youth

Improve health care outreach

Organize supportive block and community associations

Create a central hub for services and resources



Believing That Every Child Can Achieve School Success



MayKao Y. Hang

Education is opportunity; the chance for a bright and fulfilling future. Yet for many children, the path to school success is not easily navigated. Every step of the way, many children face barriers that affect their ability to interact with others, to learn and to grow. And it is the child most at risk of falling behind that repeatedly slips through the

cracks. That is where Wilder comes in.

Wilder believes every child—regardless of social, economic or developmental status—deserves the opportunity to achieve his or her full potential. Our services provide support for children from pre-kindergarten through high school, addressing developmental and social challenges throughout

a student's academic journey.

Wilder's school success programs address gaps in the system that lead to failure: culturally competent programming and mental health support services. Through programs designed specifically to address the needs of Saint Paul's Southeast Asian and African American populations, Wilder is responding to changing demographics and ensuring these populations have resources to be successful in school and life. These targeted programs address needs not met by other community and school-based resources.

As we close our fiscal year this month, we recognize and honor the many people who make this work possible through gifts of time or money. Together with your support, we are building a community where all children have an opportunity to live happy, healthy and successful lives.

—MayKao Y. Hang, President and CEO

Graduating with Honor *(continued from front)*

A separate 2011 Wilder Research survey indicated that 96 percent of parents were satisfied with the services their child received through Kofi.

Ian, a recent Kofi graduate, remembers a turning point in his Kofi experience: "Once when I was about to be kicked out of class, my Kofi Counselor, Brother Leroy, took me aside and said 'You're not a little kid anymore—you can grow up.' After that, I knew I wasn't going to go back to getting suspended, to getting into trouble." Ian, now in high school and working to become an Eagle Scout, reports better grades and a better attitude. He even hopes to return to Kofi one day as a counselor.

"These young men and women already have the potential for greatness—Kofi just gives them a push to find it," said Rudy Rousseau, Director of Kofi Services.

Like most Wilder Foundation programs, Kofi Services

has adapted to meet the needs of the Saint Paul community. Kofi's cultural focus, along with expertise from Southeast Asian Services, formed the basis for Wilder's Hlub Zoo (pronounced: loo-zhong) program, which serves Hmong youth using the same model. In just its second year, Hlub Zoo has already made great strides in helping these youth work through cultural and identity issues.

As the 2011 Kofi graduating class stands to put on their jackets for the first time, you can feel the sense of pride and accomplishment filling the room. "These young people have been through a lot and will still have challenges to face, but because of Kofi they'll know how to handle it—they'll know that they can succeed," said Rousseau.

Please consider a gift to the Kofi Forever Fund and support youth in need for another 20 years. Visit www.wilder.org or call 651-280-2469 to make your gift today.



Counselor Patrick Cunningham creates an art project with some of this year's Kofi Graduates.



Kofi graduate who hopes to be a Kofi counselor one day.



Taking a break for some one-on-one with Kofi Counselor Yusef Davis.

Kids Go Back to School with Help from UBS

For the past three years, UBS Financial Services Inc. in Saint Paul has prepared youth for school success by collecting backpacks and school supplies for Wilder's younger clients. Last year their Community Involvement Committee set a modest goal to collect 40 backpacks. This goal was quickly increased to 150 and branch manager Karen Heintz added an incentive: if that goal was met, she would contribute another 50 backpacks. Backpacks and monetary gifts came flying in. At the conclusion of the drive, UBS collected a total of 215 backpacks to donate to kids needing school supplies for the upcoming year. Thank you to everyone at UBS who helped these youth start the school year right!

If you would like to learn more about Wilder's Back to School Campaign or make a donation, please contact Linda McAdam at 651-280-2490 or linda.mcadam@wilder.org.



Members of UBS Financial Services Inc., with some of the hundreds of backpacks collected for kids in need.

Save the Date!

9th Annual Building on the Legacy Breakfast

Learn how your help supports the mission and work of the Wilder Foundation

Wednesday, November 9

7:30–8:30 a.m.

Crowne Plaza, Saint Paul

Donate Now

www.wilder.org



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Thank You for Your Support!

The Amherst H. Wilder Foundation is a nonprofit health and human services organization founded by philanthropic businessman Amherst H. Wilder and his family. For more than 105 years, Wilder has combined direct service, research and community development to address the needs of the vulnerable people in greater Saint Paul.

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