Community connections set Ezechiel on a path to college

A decade ago, 7-year-old Ezechiel discovered the English language and the American dream. He arrived with his family from Togo, Africa. Ezechiel’s parents were his best and first role models demonstrating hard work and instilling the value of a great education. They created a home environment that fostered a love of learning and taught him to never give up.

Ezechiel just graduated from high school. He thanks God first; and his teachers who taught him English; tutors who mentored him in math, physics and chemistry; and Interfaith staff like Martha Grave, who believed in him from the very beginning. He also gives thanks to community members like Brad Sleeper who guided and assisted him throughout his entire college search journey and teacher Sue Strom who supported him and his family.

As a child, he attended the Interfaith Outreach Neighborhood Program, where he built strong connections with caring adults. Ezechiel recalls, “I remember working with homework tutors and going on field trips which were fun, but were also supplemented with educational learning experiences which I wasn’t too fond of. Now I understand why it was important to have the children intellectually challenged while they were having fun on the field trip.”

As he got older, Martha saw Ezechiel’s leadership potential and encouraged him to volunteer. “He took great pride in his academic accomplishments and always seemed so confident that college was in his future. Ezechiel was a positive role model.” He became a volunteer counselor with the Neighborhood Program’s summer day camp for 2nd and 3rd graders, giving back to the program that meant so much to him as a youngster. He logged so many hours that he earned the President’s Volunteer Service Award.

Ezechiel's future is bright as he plans to attend Minnesota State University, Mankato to pursue a degree in Information Systems.

Great Expectations Fundraising Goal: $380,000 for education and youth efforts. Gifts made by Aug. 31 will be matched up to $20,000.
why family support and access to early childhood care and education matters. And how face time, talking, singing, playing, reading with our kids and the experiences and people that surround them shape their sense of being lovable and capable.

Anyone who has ever loved or raised a child beyond those early years also knows how important extended family and friends and neighbors and teachers and mentors and coaches and others are in keeping kids safe and hopeful and on track with becoming their best selves. It does take a whole village. This village knows that.

Here’s the thing. An estimated 500 of our littlest kids are at risk of arriving at kindergarten behind. Another 1,500 of our K-12 kids need our support to meet critical educational benchmarks that keep them on the path to success in life and to access sports and enrichment activities that build healthy bodies and minds and relationships.

The good news is this village is on a roll. The Great Expectations Initiative is gaining traction with impactful cradle-to-career ways for each of us and all of us to invest in the future of these kids with the time, energy, expertise, funds, in-kind gifts, rides, and simple human friendship that matters. Caring for Kids provides the foundational strong start to our whole-village commitment that all of our kids, each and every one of them, all along the way have a chance to become all they can be. Come to the breakfast to learn more and discover the role you can play in changing the odds for our kids.

A strong start in life begins in utero as the steady beat of a mother’s heart and the encouraging sound of a father’s voice prepare the way for their child’s miraculous entry into a waiting community.

We know so much more now about the critical brain development that occurs in the first few years of a child’s life and

The 2019 Caring for Kids Fundraising Breakfast
TUESDAY, AUG. 13, 7:30-9 A.M.
WAYZATA COUNTRY CLUB

Breakfast is complimentary but donations gratefully accepted.

Caring for Kids is the foundational program of Great Expectations, the school and community initiative igniting our collective power in support of our kids’ success. The Great Expectations anchor partners invite the community to attend the 2019 Caring for Kids Fundraising Breakfast. Help children in our community start strong and thrive all along, from cradle to career.

Keynote Speaker Dr. Nathan Chomilo will inform and inspire guests.

LaDonna Hoy, Executive Director, Interfaith Outreach & Community Partners

Register at iocp.org/CfKBreakfast
Get Engaged

Peggy Zimmer, counselor at Wayzata High School, sits at her desk. She’s surrounded by walls filled with inspirational framed art and handwritten notes for students, by students. Her gentle, caring demeanor radiates in her words and actions.

A year ago, Peggy struggled to help students whose families had limited incomes. One of her students, a first generation college student, was accepted at Hamline University in St. Paul, but the 18-year-old needed transportation to and from the campus. “It was heart-wrenching and frustrating. College for this student was not accessible. It was literally one car ride away.”

But this year, because of the Great Expectations Initiative, more students will get plugged into the resources they need to succeed. Thanks to donors supporting a new Great Opportunities (GO) Fund, a core effort of the Great Expectations Initiative, Orono and Wayzata School Districts’ economically disadvantaged students have access to school and community extra-curricular activities.

This year, the story ends differently. One of Peggy’s students dreamed of being the first in her family to graduate high school and the first to go to college. She talked to Peggy about her fast food job. The student noticed her manager did not always order supplies in a timely fashion. They would run out of buns, condiments and cups. Peggy asked, “Have you ever heard of supply chain?” They found an excellent two-year program that provides a Supply Chain Logistics Certificate at St. Paul College. Again, a lack of transportation threatened to derail the student’s dreams. This time, however, the Great Opportunities Fund filled the gap.

Peggy said, “I filled out the application for GO funds for the student to get a cab for her and her mom. She saw all the St. Paul College buildings, talked to admissions and financial aid staff, took an ACCUPLACER test, then got a ride back home. She came into my office and said, ‘I got my schedule for fall. Yeah, this is really happening!’” She will live on a college campus soon. Her proud family is cheering her on every step of the way.

GO funds after-school enrichment classes and clubs, camp programs, tutoring, college application fees, driver’s education and more. These opportunities are often out of reach for some families. Thanks to donors and supporters, economically disadvantaged K-12 kids now have access to more opportunities and are connecting to the power of community resources that ignite their success.

Shop or plan a school supply drive

**YOU SHOP**
**July 8 - Aug. 17**
Individuals, groups, co-workers, faith communities collect supplies

**YOU DROP OFF**
**July 29 - Aug. 17**
Donations dropped off at Interfaith Outreach offices

**FAMILIES PICK UP**
**Aug. 27**
Families receive school supplies and attend resource fair

Learn more or donate at iocp.org/backtoschool

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS!

In our 40th anniversary year, we reflect with deep gratitude on the thousands of people who have brought out the best in our community and helped create an organization equipped to meet the needs of our neighbors. Thank you to the selfless, kindhearted friends who make up our Interfaith volunteer family!

Contact Najmo Yusuf at 763-489-7505 or nyusuf@iocp.org to find your irreplaceable role.
Your gift to GE will plug kids into the resources they need

Great Expectations (GE) is a school and community initiative working to close the educational opportunity and achievement gap of an estimated 500 preschool and 1,500 K-12 children from economically disadvantaged families of our community.

In the last five years, many programs have emerged and strengthened as hundreds of people, schools and organizations have rallied to support each and every child, all along the way, from cradle to career. We need your help to keep the momentum going. To help go to iocp.org/givetokids.

Your gifts make an immediate impact on local kids. HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF YOUR INVESTMENT AT WORK:

- **$65** preps a backpack full of school supplies and equips a child for a fresh start back to school
- **$500** creates opportunities for children and youth to participate in extracurricular activities
- **$1,313** supports one Neighborhood Program site for a month
- **$4,589** provides a little learner with three months of access to quality early childhood care and education through a Caring for Kids scholarship
- **Your gift** in any amount helps fund education and youth programs.

**MEMORIALS March – May 2019**


**GRANTS March – May 2019**

City of Plymouth HRA - Housing & Neighborhoods
Wayzata Public Schools Partners for Healthy Kids - Education & Youth
Wright-Hennepin Electric Trust Operation RoundUp - Food

Donate at iocp.org/givetokids
The average annual cost of child care in a center in Hennepin County is $18,356 per year. The average cost of one year at a public university for an in-state student is slightly more at $20,770.*

When jobs pay more than child care costs, the decision to go back to work after the birth of a child makes sense and the math works. However, when parents are working low-paying jobs, the barriers to success for both the family and the child are overwhelming. The average annual cost of child care in a center in Hennepin County is $18,356 (Source: Childaware.org). In the Interfaith Outreach service area, we estimate 500 of our littlest learners and their families need help paying for child care.

Our local response to this need is Caring for Kids (CfK), the foundational program of the Great Expectations Initiative (GE). The program provides scholarships for 0-5 year olds and holistic wraparound supports through Interfaith Outreach, the Wayzata and Orono School Districts, and additional partner organizations. With community support all children and families living in poverty can get the help they need to thrive.

Kathryn Tout, Interfaith Outreach Board Member and Director of Early Childhood Research at Child Trends, explains, “We often hear research findings about high quality early education and the return on investment that we get, but we hear less about the fact that we need to start earlier than preschool. There is power in engaging with families as early as possible and helping children and their families get on a positive trajectory. Research shows that every year earlier you connect them to resources, there are benefits.”

Rachel Boettcher, Caring for Kids Program Manager, adds, “This research was confirmed by a client survey completed in partnership with Wilder Research last year. We asked 150 families with children age 0-3 what’s working and what’s hard. Many families want and need quality child care, but cannot afford it. Families are also looking for additional resources, information about child development, and connections with other parents. We are working with the school districts to connect families to existing resources while simultaneously developing new programming that will support these parents of young children.”

For more than a decade, kids and families have counted on this resource. Last year 183 children and their 157 families were part of CfK. However, 200 kids remain on the waiting list to access program resources.

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*Source: College Board

\[\text{It will take all of us - parents, neighbors, educators, faith communities, business leaders, child care and social service providers, health systems, civic and community groups, YOU - to connect kids and families to the power grid of community resources they need to succeed and thrive.}\]
Latino families connect through education: Our Best Legacy program in Orono

In alignment with the Great Expectations Initiative and to build connections with families, Orono Community Education staff participated in a University of Minnesota Extension training program called Education: Our Best Legacy. This program was chosen because it was originally developed for and by Spanish-speaking families. For the first class a parent, Orono graduate and ELL teacher co-facilitated a 7-week class in Spanish for Spanish-speaking families. Fourteen families attended – most from Orono but some from surrounding districts – along with their children, who were engaged in fun enrichment activities while their parents were in class. The goal was to build relationships and help families connect with each other and the education system while they learned ways to support their children and express their thoughts and ideas.

Offering the class in their native language allowed parents to fully participate and have deeper discussion about the topics. Having a parent as one of the facilitators built trust and made participants feel comfortable and connected. The parents were eager to learn more about the local education system so they can fully support their children’s success in learning. From the comments and discussion during the class, a document was created called “Messages to My Child’s School” from Latino parents. This document is being used to help school staff increase their understanding of Latino families. Over the course of the seven weeks, Orono school administrators, counselors, office staff and teachers were invited to talk with parents and participate in a graduation ceremony at the end of class.

Many wonderful connections were forged from the Legacy class and based on parent feedback, such as adding iPads with Google Translate at all Orono schools’ guidance and health offices. School staff and parents are making a real effort to bridge the communication challenges and work together for the success of kids. Another “Our Best Legacy” training is planned for the 2019-20 school year. Contact Donna Ostvig at dostvig@orono.k12.mn.us or 952-449-8338 x6202 for more information.

Participants in the Education: Our Best Legacy training program strengthened the interaction between parents, their children and the Orono area schools their kids attend.