

SCHOLARSHEET

Opening a World of Opportunity

Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund

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2011 LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE A HUGE SUCCESS

Almost 100 avid, motivated persons gathered in Little Rock on October 28-29th for the biennial 2011 ASPSF Leadership Development Conference. Featured among the varied plenary sessions and workshops were valuable presentations by Dr. Sherece West, President of the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation (keynote speech); Cindy VanWinkle of Circle Communications Network (fundraising); Forest Boles of the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (Lottery scholarships); and our own Dan Newsom and Justin Keller (Board leadership).

We were delighted that so many affiliate Board members came to the conference, brimming with new ideas and lots of enthusiasm. The breakout sessions on fundraising, research on new donors, social media, ASPSF's new database, student applications and publicity were filled with good information. Many great ideas on different ways of doing things were mentioned, as well as the tried and true. Participants shared what they are doing at the local level and the sheer energy level generated by learning and questioning was infectious.

So many wonderful people are devoting themselves to their local Single Parent Scholarship Fund, bringing what they have learned at the conference to bear upon the ways in which our scholarships are awarded. Attendance at the Leadership Conference has the direct effect of making Single Parent Scholarship Funds better than ever!



(L-R) Cham Percer (Crittenden Co SPSF) and Breanna Thurman (LDC Volunteer).



Cynthia VanWinkle presents Fundraising in the New Era.



Pictured (L to R): Veronda Tatum (ASPSF Board), Debbie Elgen (student speaker), Lisa Teer (former awardee), and Dr. Sherece West (Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation).

ELLEN INGRAM'S LEGACY



Pulaski County Single Parent Scholarship Fund owes much of its success over the last twelve years to the leadership of Ellen Ingram. Her magnetic personality attracted active Board members, generous donors and much public attention to the work of the Fund. Above all, she conveyed a deep sense of caring and concern for students which inspired them to succeed in their studies.

In June of this year, Ellen's husband Dale was offered an attractive position with AT&T in Oklahoma City and she submitted her resignation from the executive directorship of the PC/SPSF in September. This brought to a close Ellen's tenure with the organization, but not her love for all involved with its operation. When asked what gave her the most enjoyment and reward from the SPSF experience, she described the excitement and pride on the faces of children when they heard their mom or dad's name called to receive a gift at the annual spring reception for graduates. To Ellen, this meant everything: children learning that a college education is important, attainable and admirable... and that their parent is special.

Ellen has deep respect and praise for the board of directors of the Pulaski County SPSF. She says that there was a very solid core of working board members when she began work in 1999 and though its membership changed over the years, it has remained a committed, talented and passionate group of leaders. In the past decade the group has awarded over a million dollars in scholarships. Between 2007 and 2010, when many nonprofits struggled or closed their doors, the revenue of the PC/SPSF more than doubled!

Although Ellen and her husband are returning to their roots in Oklahoma, she leaves behind a rich legacy of helping many single mothers and fathers in Pulaski County to earn a college degree, obtain skilled employment and prosperity, and set a great example for their children. Karin Bara, Ellen's successor at the helm of the scholarship fund, has inherited a highly motivated and very successful organization to lead into the future.

News & Cues

- ▶ We say **farewell** to the following ASPSF Board Members: Karen Beller, Joe Chumbler, Pete Metzger, Mary Jackson Pitts, Veronda Tatum. **THANK YOU** for your dedication and service to single parents in Arkansas.

- ▶ **WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS.** The new ASPSF Board Members are: Scarlett Barnes, Cherokee Bradley, Derwood Brett, Judy Hammond and Josh Mahony. We welcome their enthusiasm to serve single parents in Arkansas.

- ▶ 2011 **matching grant requests** must be received or postmarked by Dec. 31st! Download a request form at www.aspsf.org/affiliates.html. Full policy and guideline information is included on the form. Questions? Call (479)927-1402.

- ▶ Scholarship Award Reports must be submitted each semester immediately after scholarship award decisions have been finalized. Report form is available at www.aspsf.org/affiliates.html.

MUSINGS by Ralph H. Nesson

We have much for which to be thankful and much work to do.

We are thankful for all of the single mothers and fathers who apply themselves so diligently to make a better life for their families. We are grateful for the hundreds of volunteers throughout our state who give of their time and effort to make our scholarships possible. We are honored by the remarkable generosity of our donors who respond to requests for support and give year in and year out to underwrite our scholarships. Truly, the bond between students and community is strengthened by the resolve of all to keep Single Parent Scholarships available to those in need.

We also have much work to do. In an article published in the New York Times back in April, we were reminded that student loan debt will total over a trillion dollars in 2011, more than the total of credit card debt. This means that the burden of debt will remain with graduates long after they have earned their degrees. The average debt is \$24,000 and default rates are rising

"If you have a lot of people finishing or leaving school with a lot of debt, their choices may be very different than the generation before them", said Lauren Asher of the Institute for College Access and Success. "Things like buying a home, starting a business, saving for their own kids' education may not be options for people who are paying off a lot of debt."

In addition to student loan debt, we in Arkansas must be concerned about a very low 37.6% college graduation rate. Coincidentally, according to an article published in the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette in September of 2010, "our state will likely rank 51st among all states and the District of Columbia in creating jobs by 2018." With fewer college graduates and fewer jobs, the best and the brightest of our students will move out of state to pursue their professional careers. This will not be good for the future of Arkansas.

So here is a statistic of which we can be extremely proud and which spells **HOPE** with capital letters: **92%** of all single parents who received our scholarships in 2010 either remained in school in 2011 or earned their degrees. We need to work hard to ensure that these successful students are not loaded down with debt and that there are jobs for them when they graduate: here, in Arkansas, where we all live and work and care for our families and thrive. We can do this by offering as many scholarships as possible and lowering dependence on student loans. We can do this by helping to keep the best and the brightest here with the promise of well-paying jobs.



MEET AN SPSF BOARD VOLUNTEER: BRENT GARNER



Brent Garner, Chair of Clark County Single Parent Scholarship Fund.

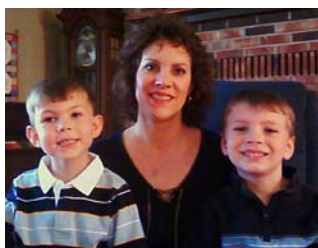
“Being a part of the Clark County Single Parent Scholarship Fund Board has added meaning to my life. Not only am I able to give back to my community but I have the ability to change lives. I truly believe someone can be born into poverty, but that individual can successfully graduate from poverty by obtaining an education. These scholarships remove barriers for single parents to obtain an education and set an example for their children. I have the opportunity to visit with single parent awardees and hear their stories, making me realize we take so many things for granted. My wife and I have three young sons, a twelve year old, an eight year old, and a huge surprise but blessing, a ten month old. It would be difficult for my wife or I to provide for their every need alone

I love attending the award ceremonies and watching the awardees' young children glow in admiration when hearing their mom or dad speaks about their accomplishments. Scholarship awardees light up when they receive their awards and family members and friends are there to support them. Many comment on 'you will never realize how much you helped my family.' Others are ecstatic to have the money to buy new school clothes for their children or much needed tires for their cars. Single Parent Scholarship Funds across the state are not providing a hand out, but a way to build their communities.”

OPENING A WORLD of opportunity

Sandra Wert SPSF of Baxter/Izard

Entergy Scholar
Current Awardee



Sandra Wert and son's Luke (l) and Brandon (r).

Career goals:

Once I receive my AA in Teaching, in May, I will be half way towards my goal! I will be applying to ASU Jonesboro to start work on my BA in Education (P-4). I am excited that I will be able to continue and finish my degree on the Mountain Home campus, even though it is through Jonesboro. I've made it this far and I can go all the way!

What is the most memorable experience of this journey?

Late nights studying, using the learning center on campus where tutors are on hand to help when needed, new friends, and receiving a letter from the Vice-Chancellors office congratulating me on my academic achievements, a proud moment!

What do you like about being a non-traditional student?

The realization of how important an education is to my future career and aspirations. Dreams don't work unless I do!

What was your inspiration to choose your degree?

I was a substitute teacher's aide for Head Start when I realized what fun it would be to be the teacher. I kept thinking as I was in the classrooms what things I would do if I were the teacher.

Roricka Hamilton Little River County SPSF

ADHE Scholar
Current Awardee



Roricka Hamilton with daughter Da'Veana Forte' .

The meaning of a college education...

To me, this means moving forward to a higher educational level that is provided at universities, colleges, and certain other institutions that awards degrees or certificates, for better careers in the future.

The significance of receiving a Single Parent Scholarship?

The significance of the scholarship is that your child is your number one priority. Making sure her needs are taken care of so single parents, like myself, can succeed in the future. Single Parent Scholarship Fund is a great program that's helps out a lot, and I recommend any young single parent in school to obtain an application.

What inspires me?

I inspire myself by working, being a full time mother, and going to college full time. My older sister (Yolanda Williams) inspires me. My daughter is my motivator. I am thankful to God and my parents Patty and Ricky Hamilton for encouraging me and being supportive every day. I am truly blessed. I follow the scripture, a favorite is Philippians 4:13, which states, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me". This is always with me because at times I want to give up but God is always by my side to guiding me in the right direction.



REACHING for the stars



Anja Kelley

Graduate

Sevier County SPSF

I can still see the peaceful and happy look on my face which glanced back at me from the mirror. It was my first day of job training and I was standing in the restroom, having found out I was pregnant. Having survived childhood in a not

just non-traditional, but highly dysfunctional family I had determined at the very young age of seven I would want to live differently for my daughter. What I didn't know that day in January 2007 was how drastically my life would change over the next few months.

I got out of the abusive relationship I was in, moved cross-country from California back to Arkansas only to wind up owning next to nothing raising a newborn by myself without a vehicle to get around. I decided that somehow I had to finish my education, even if that meant pushing a stroller to college in the rain. Allyana was 4 months old when I started going back to school full time in January 2008. Over the next three years, I was physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausted, but knew I wanted to be a teacher to make a difference in a child's life, so I kept pressing on.

As a single mother there are countless things to worry about including balancing school and work, your child's physical and your emotional well being, but the one of the biggest worries is finances. After paying for necessities (i.e. rent/utilities, diapers, clothes, care payment, insurance, etc.), without receiving child support, working fulltime and receiving a Pell Grant and other scholarships, it seemed there was never enough. This is why applying for the Sevier County Single Parent Scholarship Fund (SCSPSF) meant so much to me. Here were people not only encouraging single parents like me to finish their education in spite of all the obstacles, but who were also willing to give their time and money in fundraising effort throughout the year to be able to help the scholarship awardees financially. I have had the privilege to grow close to a few of the board members and volunteers and always felt I was treated like family.

Walking the path has paid off for me, I will never regret the decision I made to offer a better life to my daughter, and myself. Not only has the journey of self improvement made me stronger and brought me to love and embrace who I have become, but it has also let me graduate in May 2011 Summa Cum Laude (4.0), a member of Alpha Chi and Kappa Delta Pi from Southern Arkansas University. Additionally, I was recently offered a teaching position in California and I am thrilled to start at the school this fall. I am a humble awardee of the SCSPSF, and I am proud to have had the opportunity to be part of a community that unites and goes out of its way to raise money for the scholarship fund.

If you know a single parent, I urge you to encourage her to start, stay in, or go back to college. If you are a single parent yourself, enrolled in, or thinking about taking classes apply for a Single Parent Scholarship! The experience might change your life; it has mine.



Photo courtesy of Log Cabin.

Cara Cates

Graduate

Faulkner County SPSF

"I always knew I was going to go to college, and I wasn't going to let becoming a single parent at a young age stop me." These were the determined words of Cara Cates when she became a single mother at the age of 18. Now, she is a mathematics teacher at Conway Christian High School and recently awarded "teacher of the year" by the administration of Conway Christian High School and the Conway Lions Club. Read more about her journey through the following Q & A session with Cara.

Your views on education...

I believe education is extremely important. I knew that as a single parent, I had to go to college in order to give my child the same or better opportunities that I had growing up.

How were you able to juggle the demands of school and home life?

I spent most of my day at UCA then, when I was home, spent time with my daughter.

Did you have a support system while attending school?

Yes. I have the absolute best family in the whole world. They were always there for me to help me with my daughter and give me time to study or work at my job.

What challenges did you face as a single parent?

Making new friends who were not on the same path I was and dating, since I was very particular about who met my daughter.

How were you able to support your household while attending school?

The Single Parent Scholarship, Pell Grant, music and academic scholarship at UCA, work study program, and other scholarships.

What needs were met by the Single Parent Scholarship?

I bought my books for classes.



New Evaluation Tools for ASPSF

SPSF affiliates focus tons of effort and resources to assist deserving single parents to gain a good education, obtain marketable skills, and ultimately achieve a better quality of life for their families. But how do we know what effect we have? Can one scholarship have that much impact?

ASPSF is committed to answering questions like these. Recently, we launched a new Scholarship Management System. Designed to safeguard vital scholarship data, this new web-based System offers a rich set of tools enabling students to apply for scholarships online, monitor the status of their applications and awards in real-time, and self-report follow-up information. It also allows all SPSF affiliates and ASPSF staff to evaluate programs and services in a comprehensive manner. As never before, we will learn new things about our students and the services we offer, such as the number of students we serve beyond a 12-month cycle, the average student GPA, how long it takes for awardees to finish school and the fluctuation of average household income over time.

Pairing this quantitative information with the many compelling success stories, SPSF affiliates will have a more complete picture of the impact of Single Parent Scholarships in the lives of awardees. We can leverage this information to attract more applicants, promote and provide more scholarships, mentor awardees, recruit more volunteers and supporters, and make better program and funding decisions.

Successful Fundraisers, Grants and Donations



Romona Jackson, chair of Grant County SPSF, stuffs the first envelope of their annual appeal to businesses in their community. Board members will hand deliver about half of the 300 letters, while the rest will be mailed.



The White County Single Parent Scholarship Fund recently raised \$11,457 from its 4th annual Bunko Bash. Pictured is Ann Wright of Searcy receiving the coveted "Bunko Babe" trophy from WCSPSF Executive Director, Dan Newsom.



Scholarship awardees, children and supporters enjoy hotdogs, Naturals baseball, and each others' company at the annual Scholarship Strike Out, an event hosted by SPSF of NWA Alumni. School-aged children of current awardees are given \$50 school supply stipends sponsored by Wal-Mart Foundation. Through Pack the Park For Charity, Arvest Ballpark donated \$3.00 per ticket sold by SPSF of NWA.



Pope and Yell County Single Parent Scholarship Fund was joined by members of nearly 300 residents of the community and surrounding areas for its 14th Annual Shrimp and Catfish Dinner fundraiser. This year's event raised nearly \$13,000, providing money for almost a quarter of the affiliate's yearly scholarships.



Wanda Emde and late husband Billy Wayne established an endowment fund at White County Community Foundation benefiting Single Parent Scholarship Fund of White County. Pictured are Wanda Emde and Darren Amundson, the first awardee of the Emde Scholarship, with his family.



GIVE THE GIFT OF EDUCATION, GO GREEN!

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