

ANNUAL REPORT

2002

Growth in Scholarships Brings Growth in Matching Grants

Michelle Cathy is one SPSF scholarship recipient who exemplifies the capability of the single parents in our program. A mother of two, Michelle graduated from UA Monticello and has been accepted to UAMS to study general pediatrics. After graduating from medical school, Michelle hopes to open a “children friendly” clinic in Bradley County.

Including Michelle’s scholarship, the ASPSF awarded 1,433 scholarships totaling \$854,745 in 57 counties during 2002. This is an increase from last year’s totals of 1,396 scholarships amounting to \$692,015 in 54 counties. The average scholarship amount awarded in 2002 was \$597.

Matching grants also increased in 2002, with 55 county affiliates qualifying for \$209,963 – this was a \$15,171 increase from 2001. The matching grants that ASPSF provides serve as an excellent incentive for continued local fundraising efforts.

Michelle Cathy’s continued success, along with the successes of all of our scholarship recipients, shows the importance of our organization’s mission and our efforts to assist single parents throughout Arkansas. ✦

BUILDING ON A STRONG FOUNDATION

The strength of an organization and the dedication of its members can be seen when it has the ability to allow its Executive Director to take a year-long Leave of Absence. Not only has the Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund remained strong throughout the past year but it has thrived, with new initiatives coming into place and staff efficiently filling new areas of need.

In response to our continued growth and increasing need for field staff, the ASPSF applied for a business planning grant in October 2002, which was awarded in January. The ASPSF was also awarded a three-year grant for the first time in 2002 by the Walton Family Foundation, after favorable results of their commissioned evaluation of our program.

This year we have truly been “Building on a Strong Foundation,” and our achievements in 2002 are a direct reflection of our hard-working base of staff and volunteers, as well as our incredible scholarship recipients. ✦

Developing Volunteer Leadership: The Continuing Process

A devoted group of volunteers gathered in Hot Springs for the Leadership Development Conference, “Building on a Strong Foundation,” held May 31st – June 1st. The keynote speakers offered firsthand insight into the mission of the SPSF, as well as welcome advice for the Affiliates. State Representative Tracy Steele, a Pulaski County SPSF board member, motivated a renewed commitment among the volunteers along with several current recipients who shared their stories and inspired all present. Gina Booth, winner of the \$1,000 scholarship door prize for Newton County, said, “The Leadership Development Conference was a wonderful opportunity for me to obtain positive advice and gain valuable knowledge to help our county’s SPSF reach and surpass its goals.” Conference delegates enjoyed the opportunity to share

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EVALUATION DETERMINES ASPSF IS FULFILLING ITS MISSION

Dr. Dan Ferritor of the University of Arkansas spearheaded a Walton Family Foundation commissioned evaluation of the SPSF and its effectiveness in Benton and Washington Counties. With the help of Dr. Bill Mangold and several University of Arkansas Sociology graduate students, Dr. Ferritor examined the educational and economic goals of the SPSF as well as its program's broader outcomes, such as increased quality of life, self-confidence and self-esteem, and participants' higher aspirations for their children.

The study concluded that completion rates for the SPSF program were 58%, which was considered to be a "very respectable figure for the student population considered." Furthermore, those SPSF students who did complete their program exhibited a much better quality of life after completion; their average monthly income was reported at 79% above poverty level, as compared to 54% above poverty level for those who did not complete the program. SPSF graduates were also less likely to need welfare assistance programs such as Kids First,

Food Stamps, TEA, Medicaid, WIC, or HUD Rental Assistance, demonstrating that SPSF is achieving its major goals: to raise single parents' income potential and to help them move off of welfare.

One unanticipated yet favorable discovery of the evaluation was that students who had completed their SPSF programs were significantly more likely to buy a home, rather than renting or living with relatives. This is an important outcome, for, as Dr. Ferritor states, "home ownership... demonstrates that the program goal of leading people from welfare dependency has been met for many former participants."

While the researchers found positive results for the SPSF program, they did determine that the program needs help in becoming better known, appreciated, and supported throughout local communities. The evaluation also concluded that the presence of a committed, paid staff was essential to strengthen volunteer efforts and make program goals more easily attainable.

Upon completion of this study, ASPSF received an unprecedented three-year grant from the Walton Fam-

ily Foundation to continue with its worthy efforts of helping Arkansas single parents reach their full potential. ✦



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helpful advice and success stories with each other.

The Leadership Development Conference will go on hiatus for the year 2003 while the state program assesses the issues and opportunities for affiliates across Arkansas. A series of four Focus Groups will be held in different locations throughout the state. These area meetings will bring together affiliate representatives, state board members and office staff to brain-

"The Leadership Development conference was a wonderful opportunity for me to obtain positive advice and gain valuable knowledge to help our county's SPSF reach and surpass its goals."

storm about local situations, current services ASPSF provides and shape a future vision for the organization. ✦

ARKANSAS SCHOLARSHIP CONNECTION

A NEW NAME AND NEW SERVICES

In May 2002 the Arkansas Scholarship Information Service changed its name to Arkansas Scholarship Connection. The new name comes with a new logo and a renewed commitment to providing a comprehensive listing of scholarships available to all students, including single parents, in our state. The website remains the same, <http://scholarships-ar-us.org>.

ASC added some new services this year. We began attending scholarship seminars and workshops in more areas across the state. In addition to attending college nights at high schools across Arkansas, ASC offered for the first time scholarship nights for affiliate organizations. Affiliates have re-

sponded warmly to the proposal and fall 2003 should see the beginning of some of these gatherings.

The total number of website visitors has jumped 107% with a 121% increase in return visitor activity. The new outreach activities have been cited as the primary reason for this new level of activity. †

NEED MONEY FOR COLLEGE?



ASC CAN HELP!

Log onto our website at:
<http://scholarships-ar-us.org>

ARKANSAS SCHOLARSHIP CONNECTION
479-927-1402

NEW BOARD MEMBERS BRING FRESH INSIGHTS & INNOVATIVE IDEAS

In an effort to increase awareness about the dilemmas of single parent-hood throughout our communities, the ASPSF actively seeks board members from a wide range of occupations.

The year 2002 was no exception as we gladly welcomed five highly qualified new board members from a variety of fields across the state. Tom Mueller, a banker, and Beverly Chapple, a manager have been active with the White County SPSF program and bring fresh ideas from the Delta to the state board. Diane Tatum, a Community Manager for Entergy, brings affiliate experience as well as statewide perspective. Rodney Shepherd, a Su-

pervisor at Superior Federal Bank, offers his knowledge of being active in Sebastian county United Way and many other organizations. And, Marjorie Marugg-Wolfe, a longtime volunteer and Founding Board Member, is again contributing her expertise and enthusiasm to the Board.

“The Board of an organization is its most important arm. The board determines organizational direction, sets policies and monitors progress towards goals”, said Cindy Webb, Acting Executive Director. “ASPSF has a board that is exceptional in its talent pool and or-

ganizational knowledge. We are very fortunate to have such a deep well of experience and the new board members add to that pool in significant ways.”

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Arkansas Single Parent
Scholarship Fund

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Mission Statement: The mission of the Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund is to enable single parents to attain self – sufficiency through post-secondary education.



This 2002 Annual Report of the ASPSF was written by Cindy F. Webb and edited by Lani S. Froelich.

A FINAL NOTE

This past year has been a rewarding and exciting time for me, personally and professionally. I have been part of an organization with a rich history of service and a bright future for many years to come. Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund recipients, staff, volunteers and donors have all shown great support and enthusiasm for me during 2002-2003.

When I accepted the position of Acting Executive Director in June 2002, I knew that I was beginning an exceptional journey of discovery. The story of the recipients and their tenacity to create a better life for themselves and their children inspires and humbles me. The dedication and professionalism of the volunteers at the affiliate level and board level remain standards for volunteerism at its best. They organize events, meet with recipients and award scholarships, provide oversight for our state organization in a way that ensures the appropriate stewardship of the funds we receive and each one has a commitment to our mission that is unmatched.

I know this was a strong organization when I arrived. I believe it is even stronger today because of the level of commitment to excellence. Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund will continue to serve the single parents of Arkansas for years to come through its affiliate organizations.

Don't forget to check out our website www.aspsf.org from time to time. During 2002 we added (thanks to Chris Womack!) an online version of our updated resource manual, **The Toolbox** and also began to post issues of our periodic newsletter The Scholarsheet. These resources are there every day for use by our affiliate organizations. There are also items and news that may change monthly.

As our organization continues to change with the times, I look forward to continuing the journey with you. Thank you for the opportunity to serve. ✦

Cindy F. Webb
Acting Executive Director
June 2002-May 2003