

Arkansas
SINGLE PARENT SCHOLARSHIP FUND

2004 ANNUAL REPORT

Record year for scholarship awards

According to submitted reports, 1,760 scholarships worth 976,181 were awarded in sixty-five counties. The ASPSF provided \$248,328 in affiliate matching grants during the year, also a record-setting level.

Our scholarships are given to those who meet a simple set of eligibility criteria: awardees must be low or moderate income single parents with custodial care of children under the age of eighteen. They must be high school graduates or have earned their

GED and have enrolled in a post-secondary course of study leading to a degree, diploma, certificate or license. Awardees must prepare themselves through study for a skilled occupation leading directly to economic self-sufficiency.

Since the ASPSF was founded in 1990, 13,813 scholarships worth \$6,727,192 have been awarded within the state of Arkansas. Affiliate support in the form of matching grants has totaled \$1,712,807.

Opening doors to a brighter world.

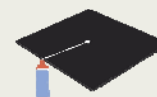


Student success rate reaches 85.4%

A remarkable indicator of student success was determined by the annual follow-up study of awardees performed in 2003. That study followed the progress of 989 students, among whom 684 remained in school and 162 earned their degrees. The resulting "retention and graduation rate" came to 85.4% — exactly double that of students at public colleges and universities in Arkansas.

There is no better proof of the positive effect of our scholarship program than the number of awardees who remain in school through to their graduation.

When more than four out of five students are completing their degree programs, it is clear from our research and feedback from awardees that Single Parent Scholarships are an important part of their success.



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614 East Emma Avenue, Suite 119
Springdale, Arkansas 72764
Phone: (479) 927-1402
Fax: (479) 751-1110
www.aspsf.org

Our Programs

Communication project is complete

The first year of a three-year ASPSF Business Plan was completed in 2004, with emphasis on improving communication between Single Parent Scholarship Funds and the public. Funded in part by a grant from the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, the Communication Project was a direct response to the stated need of affiliates to increase public awareness of their important efforts at the local level.

Staff and Board worked hard throughout the year to develop new public awareness tools for affiliates. With the help of the able advertising consultant, Gary Weidner, a CD-Rom disk was created containing several adaptable "products:" a

new logo, stationery, brochure, poster, public service announcements for radio and television, and two Power Point presentations. In addition to these products, Wal-Mart Foundation donated the design and printing of 25,000 professional evergreen folders. These have been distributed to affiliates for use at fundraising and award events, grant submissions, educational fairs and other public functions.

The ASPSF will provide ongoing technical assistance to affiliates in the use of the disks, making it easy as possible for computer operators at the local level to create customized publicity materials.



Delta Scholarship Project

In Year 2000, the ASPSF Board of Directors created a special initiative aimed at increasing the number and value of Single Parent Scholarships in a 27 county area bordering on the Mississippi River. Now in its fifth year, the Delta Scholarship Project has gone beyond all projections in building active affiliates and generating assistance to students. In 2004, 428 scholarships worth \$169,158 were awarded in 26 counties. The twenty-seventh, Drew County, is being reorganized and will award its first scholarships in the fall semester of 2005.

Kim Dollins and Beverly Chapple serve the ASPSF as field representatives in the Delta. Working out of their homes, they assist all affiliates through board training, fundraising, leadership recruitment and reorganization. They have been instrumental in many counties in building volunteer boards and teaching the skills with which board members have created successful scholarship funds.

Arkansas Scholarship Connection

The Arkansas Scholarship Connection (ASC), initiated in 1992, is a one-of-a-kind information service on financial aid available through ASPSF. It is the only source of comprehensive information on in-state academic scholarships, loans and grants on the World Wide Web.

Kelley Bradley, ASC Project Director, regularly updates the 1,589 "units of information" on the ASC web site. These are descriptions of scholarships that require constant checking for accuracy. She adds, deletes and modifies the scholarship information as she researches current data. The data is then entered into the scholarship database on the ASC web site and made available to those who seek the most up-to-date information available. Users need merely to complete a personal profile form on the ASC web site in order to access the fruit of Kelley's labor. Over 12,380 persons did so in 2004.

The ASC also offers links to other financial aid resources nationwide, advice and tips on applying for financial aid, and workshop presentations on using its database to the best advantage. ASC can be found on the World Wide Web at ArkansasScholarshipConnection.org.



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Accomplishments



National recognition

The Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund received national recognition in 2004 with the appearance of articles published in the February issue of THE ROTARIAN Magazine and in the November 3 issue of USA TODAY. The article in THE ROTARIAN focused on the many Rotary Clubs throughout Arkansas that support and sponsor local Single Parent Scholarship Funds. The USA TODAY article touched on the effort made in Arkansas to build local Funds from the ground up with grassroots support and control as the keys to suc-

cess. Also mentioned in the article was the generous and loyal support to the ASPSF provided almost from day one by the Walton Family Foundation, a philanthropy that recognizes the pivotal role of ongoing grant provision to the growth of a nonprofit organization.

At present, projects modeled on the ASPSF are developing in Toledo, OH, Champaign, IL, and Joplin, MO. We are pleased to witness such efforts in other parts of the country and happy to be of help to them.

Walker Foundation offers challenge grant

In March 2004, the Willard and Pat Walker Charitable Foundation of Springdale presented the ASPSF with a major challenge grant of \$500,000. By meeting the challenge, a great infusion of new dollars will be available for scholarships through ASPSF affiliates. Another use of these resources, as outlined in the original proposal, includes the funding of a third field staff position in an area of the state where the need is great and Single Parent Scholarships are less available.

As of late mid-August 2005, \$259,032 had been contributed or pledged to the Walker Challenge campaign. This represents 52% of the total needed for full match. Efforts are underway to develop a statewide Walker Challenge Advisory Committee to help successfully complete the fundraising campaign.

Portrait of a successful recipient

Vanessa Dolphin was only 20 years old when she gave birth to her son Jalen. Upon the sudden departure of his father from her baby's life, Vanessa knew she would have to raise Jalen by herself. Always good at math, Vanessa enrolled at the University of Arkansas in Little Rock to pursue an accounting degree while working part-time. Upon applying for a Pulaski County Single Parent Scholarship, she was provided with both financial aid and a mentor who gave her a lot of emotional support when she was "really stressed, worn out and about to give up." Yet, she refused to quit and eventually earned her bachelor's degree

in accounting and finance. A job as a tax accountant at Alltel Corporation awaited her, a position she has held for over a year while she has been preparing for the state licensing examination to become a certified public accountant.

As a very hard working and devoted mother, Vanessa Dolphin has welded intelligence to determination in order to achieve success in her professional life, all the while providing a remarkable example to her child. In her own words: "I think Jalen will embrace education because he knows that's why Mommy doesn't have to work two jobs anymore."

Executive Director
Ralph H. Nesson
rnesson@jtlshop.jonesnet.org

President
Alice Abson
Vice-President
Herman Davenport
Secretary
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Boylee Hamilton
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Valerie Brown	Mary Ann Rollans
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Phillip McAdams	Edward L. Williams
Loretta N. McGregor	Marjorie Wolfe
Tom Mueller	

Delta Scholarship Project Field Staff
Beverly Chapple
Kim Dollins

**Arkansas Scholarship Connection
Project Director**
Kelley Bradley
kbradley@jtlshop.jonesnet.org

**Editor, Webmaster, and
Executive Assistant**
Chris Womack
cwomack@jtlshop.jonesnet.org

Rebirth of a scholarship fund

By the end of 2003, Single Parent Scholarships for Crawford and Sebastian counties were in decline. Due to the absence of a representative community board and a disinterested fiscal agent, less and less help was being offered to eligible students. In an effort to resolve this problem, ASPSF staff visited the area over a two-month period with the goal of attracting community volunteers onto a new board of directors. Fortunately, a willing and pro-active partner in this process was identified: the United Way of the Fort Smith area.

With the help of United Way executive director Angela Tilley and ASPSF board member Rodney Shepard, a group of eighteen people was brought together in early February. Led by elected chair Kathy Humiston, the new board members rolled up their sleeves and went to work in bringing the

message of the Single Parent Scholarship Fund to the community. Intensive efforts at publicity and fundraising attracted many student applications and substantial contributions. Thirty scholarships worth \$18,225 were awarded in the fall semester of 2004.

The revival of the Single Parent Scholarship Fund in the Fort Smith area is a good example of how community spirit can be mobilized in support of education. There is a recognized need in the area for helping impoverished single-parent families, as proven by a 2003 survey conducted by United Way. By bringing together volunteers willing to work very hard to create new financial aid resources, the need is now being addressed through a very active Single Parent Scholarship Fund of Crawford and Sebastian Counties.



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614 E. EMMA AVE., STE. #119
SPRINGDALE, AR 72764

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