



# ANNUAL REPORT

JUNE 1, 2021 - MAY 31, 2022

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[www.breakthrough  
twincities.org](http://www.breakthroughtwincities.org)

2051 Larpenteur Ave E,  
Saint Paul, Minnesota  
55109, USA

edSITE

[www.breakthrough](http://www.breakthrough)



*Breakthrough students after presenting their bills at the MN state capitol*



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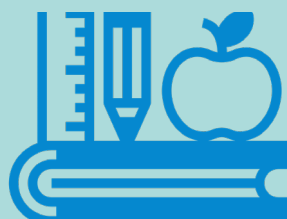
# ABOUT US

Breakthrough Twin Cities (BTC) prepares students for college success and cultivates the next generation of educators.



**Our Middle School Program** is a 5.5 week summer program with monthly Saturday sessions during the school year. Middle school students receive 150+ hours of rigorous academic instruction in STEM, literature, writing, and electives. They also experience social-emotional skill-building, community building, and 1x1 support.

**Our High School Program** provides students with social-emotional skill building, academic support, individualized college counseling, as well as career exploration through monthly Saturday Sessions and individual advising.



# BREAKTHROUGH CODES TO COLLEGE SUCCESS

## **BE BREAK- THROUGH**

Being Breakthrough means challenging ourselves, being proud of who we are, & approaching new situations and peers as our authentic selves.

## **BE CURIOUS**

We are always exploring and learning new things. We strive to be informed and educated people, actively listening to others because we are interested in learning from diverse experiences.

## **STRIVE TO UNDER- STAND**

We listen carefully to what everyone has to say and make sure that we understand each person's unique point of view.

## **PERSIST**

We stick to a task until we complete it even if it means taking a path we weren't anticipating. We use our resources to get the support we need.

## **BE GRATEFUL**

We are grateful for the opportunities given to us and work to make Breakthrough a great experience for everyone. We know we are appreciated as much as we appreciate our peers and teachers.

## **RELISH HARD WORK TOGETHER**

We are passionate about learning and being together. We know that Breakthrough is hard work and what we learn is important for our future, and we have fun because we enjoy doing it together.

## **LIVE THE GROWTH MINDSET**

We stick to a task until we complete it even if it means taking a path we weren't anticipating. We use our resources to get the support we need.





## PROGRAM

Breakthrough Twin Cities provides a six-year college access program to support historically under-represented students and their families in the Twin Cities. In middle school, we provide academic enrichment the summer,

programming during in which college and high-school students serve as Teaching Fellows and inspire students to grow and reach their goals. Our high school program helps students navigate school, the rigors of college preparation, and other challenges as they grow and develop. Students attend monthly Saturday sessions during the school year and receive ongoing school year case management, via academic monitoring and mentorship.



## VISION

Breakthrough Twin Cities envisions a future where all students have the resources to reach their full potential, where every classroom is led by an engaging teacher committed to each student's success, and where society as a whole realizes the ultimate social and economic benefits of fully investing in its youth.

# STAFF & BOARD

*Lesley Chester*  
Director of Development

*Martha Malinski*  
College Counselor

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Program Manager

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Summer Program Director

*Solina Nhil*  
Program Manager

*Cristian Villalobos*  
School Year Program  
Director

*Andrea Hite*  
Donor Engagement Officer

*Wade Peterson*  
College Counselor

*Brittni Williams*  
High School Advisor

*Simon Lee*  
Program Manager

*Josh Reimnitz*  
Executive Director

*Kalli Wilson*  
Marketing & Operations  
Coordinator

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Performance, Leadership  
Development, Learning &  
Organizational Effectiveness  
Lakeshore Learning  
Materials



# MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I really enjoy setting goals. Taking the time to dream, to figure out what is most important, and put it down on paper has consistently been a valuable personal and professional exercise for me. Research shows that, in general, people tend to overestimate what they can accomplish in a year but underestimate what they can accomplish in a decade. We try to do it all in the near-term and end up short-changing ourselves when it comes to long-term prosperity and results.

In looking back on our last year, I'm proud to say the work we've done is for the long-term. Feedback from stakeholders, coupled with deep introspection over the last two years, has produced significant changes with the aim of building an organization and program that is as resilient, resourceful, and relevant as our students and Teaching Fellows. It was a year of difficult transition, straddling in-person and online options, not knowing how long each would last. While, at the same time, adapting our processes and programming to align with our values, be more equitable, and more inclusive.

Process improvement is like fundraising for transportation; it's not sexy. People want to contribute to the engaging lessons and leadership development opportunities, not the bus to get the students on site. But, like buses, process is what gets us to our end goals and the way we *reach our goals matters to us and our community*. We continue to make investments in staff salaries and Teaching Fellow stipends to attract diverse and effective talent. We recognized the importance of strong student retention rates, and continuous improvement as a community so we invested in restorative justice to foster an environment which encourages growth and working together to solve problems rather than blaming others or removing students from the learning environment.

It's fun to look back on the year and be reminded of the huge progress we made in the short-term. So, while we increased student cohort sizes at each of our St. Paul locations and held our first-ever in-person activities at our Eastern Carver County site, I'm most proud of the less visible signs of growth. That "not sexy" progress allows us to realize incredible results over the long-term. I invite you join us as we defy conventional goal-setting pitfalls and overachieve in the next decade. Learn more about what we're doing. Invite others to the Breakthrough community. And further your investment in future generations.

Thank you for being a part of the Breakthrough family.

In service,  
josh





# MESSAGE FROM BOARD CHAIR

Greetings BTC Champions!

Breakthrough is such an important program for students, not only because of our focus on learning and teaching, but because it brings kids together and helps them find people who love to learn like they do. The pandemic was difficult on our students. Although our program staff did tremendous work teaching and guiding them under difficult circumstances, the online learning model robbed them of the togetherness that is so critical to the Breakthrough experience.

In the summer of 2021, we were fortunate enough to be able re-capture some of that much-needed togetherness with a hybrid model that featured in-person events each week. In 2022, all of us—students, teaching fellows, staff, and board—are looking forward to re-engaging with colleagues, re-connecting with friends, and re-energizing the hallways and classrooms of Breakthrough facilities with a fully in-person summer program.

Fortunately, through the struggles of the pandemic, we have been able to maintain a strong financial position through the generous support of organizations and individual donors. We are grateful to all of our supporters who continue to believe, as we do, that the Breakthrough mission of teaching highly motivated students and nurturing budding teachers today is the best way to ensure a better tomorrow.

There is nothing like the energy of Breakthrough – the students teeming with excitement and the anticipation of new learning, the teaching fellows bursting with inspiration – the hallways of our facilities can barely contain it. We are excited about the future of that energy as we look to build on a solid foundation to engage more students, inspire more teachers, and improve more lives. Together.

Amanda Abdo Sheahan  
Board Chair, 2022-23



# STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS

## Latrese Johnson & Senam Akyea

Latrese Johnsons and Senam Akyea met for the first time when they were 10 years old. At a sports summer camp, they would sit together under the shade of the trees to talk. "I can remember laughing so hard at all the jokes Senam made..." Latrese said. "To this day, she still makes me laugh that hard." They talked about their bond- the way their shared experience allowed them to become so close. "We were both awkward Black girls who didn't fit into the mold society created for us," they said.

They didn't end up staying in contact, but were both introduced to Breakthrough in middle school. They had big dreams about the radiant and accomplished people they wanted to become. "After the Breakthrough presentation at my middle school, I immediately signed up for the program," Senam said. "I knew that Breakthrough would be able help me achieve my academic goals that I wouldn't be able to reach by myself." They were both accepted to the Breakthrough program and excited to take on a new opportunity.

Senam



"Imagine my surprise as I walked into the library at St. Paul Central and saw Latrese!" Senam said. They spent that summer riding the bus together, talking about classes, and laughing the way they always had.

Latrese and Senam echoed the sentiment that they did not grow up with representation of what success might look like for them. It was difficult to find examples of people that looked like them on TV or in the books they read. "Not only did I find it difficult to fit in amongst my peers, but when I looked around me, all of my teachers were white," Latrese said. They shared that their summer at Breakthrough was the first experience of having teachers who belonged to communities of color.

Latrese



"We were able to find true friendship in each other and a community in which we could be our authentic selves," Latrese told us.

The Breakthrough experience allows many students to see themselves reflected in their teachers and the learning community around them. "When I saw that something like Breakthrough existed, I knew that I was not alone," Senam said. She reflected on memories of her teachers laughing, dancing, celebrating, and creating spaces for self-expression.

"Through Breakthrough, I learned that I was not a burden or problem. I was not too much, I was not unworthy of love or kindness," Senam concluded. "Breakthrough taught me how to develop a love of learning and how to love myself again."

## Yonis Wehelie

Yonis Whelie, a BTC graduate from the Class of 2022, moved into an exciting new chapter this Fall as he prepared to attend Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

He first heard about Breakthrough from his twin sisters, who told him all about their time as Breakthrough students– the classes, field trips, new friends, and more. Even before his first summer with the program, he knew he wanted to participate.

“Breakthrough opened my eyes to the real joys of learning,” Yonis said. He appreciated the way Breakthrough curriculums involved engaged and hands-on learning. He learned through experiments, building, and challenges that made math and science exciting for him. “During my time at Breakthrough, the tools I acquired have been crucial to my success,” he said.

Yonis’ parents immigrated to the US from Somalia to give their children better opportunities. He has worked hard to take advantage of every opportunity available, and his success is a testament to years of dedication and the implementation of all the tools he has learned. When navigating the path to pursue higher education, Yonis cited BTC’s college counseling program as integral to understanding all aspects of the college process and financial aid.

Now, he is an undergraduate university student excited to explore all his interests and passions– and his sisters are both attending medical school! The Breakthrough community is so proud of their accomplishments.

As a student we wanted to celebrate, Yonis was one of the student speakers at our Booyah Bash in May 2022. In his speech, he finished, “Thank you for all the help you have given me, and students like me.”



# TEACHING FELLOW SPOTLIGHTS

## CALVIN CHANG

The summer of 2021 was Calvin's second year as a Teaching Fellow (TF), but what originally brought him to Breakthrough Twin Cities was the experience he heard about from friends who were Tf alumni. "I was at the verge of not wanting to be a teacher any more," he said, "until I heard of this program."

Being a TF taught Calvin a lot about himself and reaffirmed his desire to become a teacher. His plan is to graduate college with his Bachelor's degree, and then begin his first year teaching! He believes that what makes Breakthrough so special is how community is built. "It is a safe environment for everyone to open up as themselves!" Calvin said.

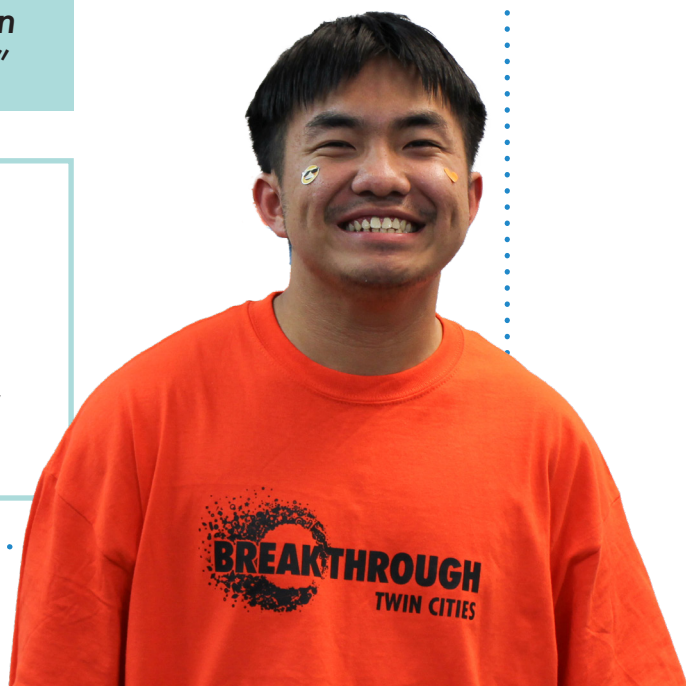


*"I wanted to see if I do belong in the teaching field, and this was probably one of the best decisions I have chosen for myself!"*



Calvin is a junior at University of Wisconsin - River Falls, studying Elementary Education and minoring in Mathematics.

He is also working as an as an Activities Kindness Staff at Saint Paul Academy's after school program.





# ANNAGRACE KATZENMEIER

AnnaGrace is originally from Kansas and is currently a senior at St. Olaf College. She is majoring in English and Education and a concentration in Race and Ethnic Studies. She got her start at Breakthrough Twin Cities in Summer 2021 and we were thrilled to have her back in Summer 2022.

AnnaGrace was brought to Breakthrough via St. Olaf's college education department. She knew immediately that the opportunity of being a Teaching Fellow was incomparable to any other summer intern opportunity.

She credits Breakthrough Twin Cities as the first place she's had the opportunity to have her own classroom. As a result, there have been so many relationships with students, faculty, and staff that she is so grateful for.



*"I had a student who told me that I was the first teacher to believe in him. That stuck with me because, if we as teachers are not believing in our students, how can we expect them to grow into all of the amazing potential they have?"*



After graduation, AnnaGrace plans to start teaching professionally, with some long term plans to go back for her Master's in teaching and culturally responsive pedagogy.



# KENIA MARTINEZ



Kenia's journey with Breakthrough began when they were a student. After graduating in 2019, they were excited to start teaching with Breakthrough!

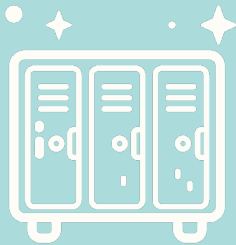
Kenia had always planned to become an elementary school teacher, but because of the experience she had as a Teaching Fellow, they realized their love for working with older students as well. "I love that it's a student teaching system," Kenia said. "Middle schoolers are so funny and do such a great job doing their work during summer." One of their favorite Breakthrough memories was a trip to Camp Menogyn with the 9th grade Breakthrough Leadership Program. They went canoeing and camping with the students, and got to do a passage through the Canada/U.S. border!

*"As a first generation, undocumented student, Breakthrough was a big reason that I knew what to do to begin my path to college."*

Currently, Kenia is a senior at Augsburg University, planning to graduate in Spring 2023. They are majoring in Elementary Education and hope to get a job at an elementary school.



# PROGRAM UPDATES



## SUMMER PROGRAM

In Summer 2021, we provided academic instruction and social-emotional support to 221 middle school students. To increase Teaching Fellow training, the student program was temporarily reduced from six weeks to five weeks. In the second year of the pandemic, we developed a hybrid format with more in person activities for Summer 2021. These revisions and enhancements were brought from learnings from our virtual Summer 2020.

One change was having the majority of our Teaching Fellows in-person at Mounds Park Academy, teaching in a classroom setting, and providing consistency for the Teaching Fellow experience. We also added two in-person days per week to Summer 2021, for social-emotional development, community building activities, and field trips.

Our summer 2021 student outcomes were strong:

**91%**

feel that they have a positive college-going role model

**76%**

felt better prepared for the subsequent school year because of BTC

**88%**

felt that BTC provides them with a supportive community





# SCHOOL YEAR PROGRAM

During the 2021–22 school year, we served 523 middle and high school students.

Our students are required to meet at least two of the following criteria to be eligible to participate:

**97%** identify as a race under-represented in college

**86%** eligible for free or reduced lunch

**77%** first generation college students

**68%** speak a language other than English at home

**29%** live in a single parent household

Our traditional school year Saturday sessions returned to in-person. Activities featured our core college prep activities while incorporating more community building and culturally relevant activities, such as conversations around race and structural inequities in education. This is in addition to our hallmark college preparation support, financial literacy development, and fun. As is the case in a typical year, all students received monthly mentoring and coaching provided by college students in the form of check-ins, goal setting, problem-solving, and connecting students and families to community resources.

During the 2021-22 school year, we moved away from school year coaches to full-time advisors to provide more consistent individualized support for students. This allowed for increased continuity and expertise for engaging with students. We are also exploring increased content and engagement for 9th and 10th graders as well, to increase support for those critical years of early high school.





# TEACHING FELLOWS

In addition to striving for college matriculation for our students, Breakthrough prepares the next generation of culturally competent educators. From a pool of 171 applicants, we hired and trained 47 Teaching Fellows to teach middle school students in summer 2021.

Our Teaching Fellows had stellar experiences. According to surveys:

**97%**

grew as a teacher as a result of their Teaching Fellowship

**86%**

reported that the Teaching Fellowship increased/reinforced their interest in teaching

**100%**

reported that they understand the rigors of teaching as a result of the Teaching Fellowship

Nine of our Teaching Fellows had past experience as a Breakthrough Twin Cities student, and six came back to teach for a second year.

Compared to the 7.3% of teachers of color in MN, 55% of our Teaching Fellows are persons of color, providing vital role models for our students.

Same as Summer 2020, we extended the training from 80 to 120 hours, adding a third week, to provide time for additional cultural competency training and practice on virtual platforms. In 2021, we increased base Teaching Fellow stipend by about 20%, from \$2500 to \$3000, to acknowledge the challenging and vital work that Fellows do to deliver the core programming of Breakthrough, and also to increase the equity of compensation at the organization, making the fellowship a viable option for more BIPOC candidates. This pay is among the highest in the Breakthrough Collaborative—we want to be leaders in the field for equitable pay for aspiring educators.

While we conducted a hybrid summer program, providing both virtual and in-person engagement for students, roughly one-third of our Teaching Fellows worked remotely the entire summer. This reduced the number of faculty we had on-site for in-person activities on Wednesdays and Fridays. The varying needs of Teaching Fellows required a lot of adaptation and creativity to support different hybrid statuses and variables.



# BTC CLASS OF 2022



Rayan Abawari, Augsburg University  
Usrah Abawari, University of St Thomas  
Ajaiba Abbajebel, University of Minnesota-  
Rochester  
Joleene Acon, St Paul College  
Deekha Ahmed, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities  
Senam Akyea, Spelman College  
Robel Amdemariam, Carleton College  
Darnell Anderson, Inver Hills Community College  
Ohn Mar Aung, Century College  
Elijah Ayler, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities  
Jazmin Bartuah, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities  
Donald Beoku Betts, Dunwoody College of  
Technology  
Tyler Brookins, Hampton University  
Amy Cano, DePaul University  
Shylynne Cha, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities  
Andy Dang, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities  
Mustapha Fofaneh, St Paul College  
Mahlet Gebreyesus, Howard University  
Tristen Her, Century College  
Abi Hernandez Castillo, University of  
Wisconsin-River Falls  
Brooklyn Hill, Pacific NW College of Art  
Dun Lwe Htoo, Dakota Technical College  
Kyaw Htway, St Olaf College  
Amal Jama, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities  
Aryanna Johnson, St Paul College  
Latrese Johnson, Howard University  
Anthony Landaverde, Century College  
Ger Lor, Century College  
Nu Chy Lor, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities  
Sadie Lor, Concordia University- St Paul  
Alisson Martinez Villa, Hamline University  
La'Mya Meniffee, North Carolina A&T  
Hamza Mohammed, Macalester College  
Htoo Law Moo, Metropolitan State University  
Nicole Moo, Augsburg University  
Richer Moo, St Olaf College  
Madeline Moua, St Paul College

Pa Kou Moua, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities  
Adelaide Munoz, Luther College  
Milky Osman, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities  
Sue Paw, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities  
Shauntae Perales, Augsburg University  
Denasia Quiroga, Enlisted- US Army  
Marco Escobar Rodriguez, St Paul College  
Marvin Rosas, St Paul College  
Demarjai Shaheer, Dunwoody College of  
Technology  
Pep Si, Century College  
Kwee Lay Soe, Metropolitan State University  
Janet Song, Century College  
Serenity Soulisak-Hoang, University of St Thomas  
Lailah Stora, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities  
Rosalee Taken Alive, St Paul College  
Duachi Thao, Century College  
Janpen Thao, Northern Michigan University  
JonJeng Thao, St Olaf College  
Tou Hmong Thao, Minnesota State University -  
Mankato  
Maddox Trujillo, Hamline University  
Andrew Vang, Century College  
Cianna Vang, National Guard  
Daisy Vang, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities  
Stacy Vang, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities  
Nivea Vang, Augsburg University  
Aline Vu, Augsburg University  
Paw Wah, St Catherine University  
Yonis Wehelie, Georgetown University  
William Williams, Augsburg University  
Kimberly Xiong, University of Minnesota-Rochester  
Yulia Xiong, Century College  
Angel Yang, Hennepin Technical College  
DuaCi Yang, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities  
Mailee Yang, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities  
Maxwell Yang, Stanford University  
Pa Zong Yang, Metropolitan State University  
Pa Zong Yang, St Paul College  
Thanaporn Yang, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities

# BTC CLASS OF 2022 STATS

The average annual

**scholarship  
awarded to a BTC  
graduate was  
\$47,608**

The average student had

**89%**  
**of costs covered  
by Scholarships  
and Grants**

**3.10**

**is the average  
GPA for the BTC  
Class of 2022**

**100%**

**were accepted to  
college! \***

**\* compared to the 69%  
state average**



**Congratulations to the Class of 2022  
graduating from college or university!**

Joseph Hang, Minnesota State University-Mankato  
Sarah Ndogu, University of St Thomas  
Nathnael Taye, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities  
Nongnut Thao, St Olaf College  
Mai Xee Vang, St Olaf College  
Meng Vang, Minnesota State University-Mankato  
Shouayee Vue, Macalester College  
Vang Xiong, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities  
Xia Neng Xiong, St Olaf College  
Tria Yang, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities

## SUPPORT AND REVENUE

	Without Donor Restriction	With Donor Restriction	Total
<b>Grants and Contributions</b>	\$927,903	\$550,000	\$1,477,903
<b>In-Kind Contributions</b>	\$116,461	-	\$116,461
<b>Program Service Revenues</b>	\$142,365	-	\$142,365
<b>Special Events:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Special Events Income</i></li> </ul>	\$89,831	-	<b>Special Events Net</b> \$70,143
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Costs of Direct Benefits to Donors</i></li> </ul>	\$19,688		
<b>Other Income</b>	\$5,698	-	\$5,698
<b>Net Assets Released from Restrictions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Satisfaction of Purpose and Time Restrictions</i></li> </ul>	\$448,377	(\$448,377)	-
<b>TOTAL SUPPORT AND REVENUE</b>	\$1,710,947	\$101,623	\$1,812,570

## EXPENSE

	Without Donor Restriction	With Donor Restriction	Total
<b>Program Services</b>	\$966,945	-	\$966,945
<b>Support Services</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Management and General</i></li> </ul>	\$247,770	-	\$247,770
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Fundraising</i></li> </ul>	\$133,169	-	\$133,169
<b>Total Support Services</b>	\$380,939	-	\$380,939
<b>TOTAL EXPENSE</b>	\$1,347,884	-	\$1,347,884

## CHANGE IN NET ASSETS

	Without Donor Restriction	With Donor Restriction	Total
<b>Net Assets- Beginning of Year</b>	\$720,953	\$569,289	\$1,290,242
<b>Net Assets- End of Year</b>	\$1,084,016	\$670,912	\$1,754,928



# DONORS

## Corporations and Foundations

3M Foundation  
Albright Foundation  
Allianz Life Insurance Company  
AmazonSmile Foundation  
Amy and Chip Pearson Family Foundation  
Andersen Corporate Foundation  
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Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation  
Saint Paul Saints Baseball  
Sauer Foundation  
Securian Financial Group  
Sewell Family Foundation  
Stages Theatre Company  
Surly Brewing Co.  
Target Corporation  
U.S. Bank Foundation  
Walser Foundation  
Xcel Energy

## Government and School Partners

Minnesota Office of Higher Education  
Mounds Park Academy  
Ramsey County/Saint Paul Children's Collaborative

## Individual Donors

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William and Erin Newkirk  
Rick and Tamra Anderson  
Levi Andrist  
Maneesh Apte  
Nina Archabal  
Anne and Randy Atchison  
Kenneth Bailey  
Cynthia Barry  
James and Leslie Becker  
Amanda and Daniel Beckett  
Amy Benson  
Kate and Wyatt Black  
Holly Blades

Robert Blankmeyer  
Heather Boschke and Tom Freiburger  
Kristyn Brisnehan  
Michael Burns  
Adrienne Campbell  
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Derek Cramblit  
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Tiffany Daniel  
Caroline Davidson  
June and Jason Davis  
Laurie Davis and Scott McConnell  
Patrick Deconinck and Marie Andree  
Deconinck  
Jennifer Dumdei  
François Ecclesiaste  
Gail Engstrom and Michael Dai  
Melissa Eschenbacher  
Hope Esparolini  
Sarah Euston  
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Elizabeth Farace  
Ashley and Hilary Farrington  
Judith Fawcett  
Joan Felton  
Magdalena Fitzgerald  
Dawn Fobbe Johnson  
Dana Frederick  
Peter and Victoria Gallus  
Nick and Ingrid Gangestad  
Joan and James Gardner  
Nathaniel Gibbs  
Richard Gordon and Marie Dillon  
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