

Volume 4, Issue 1 November 2021

MILESTONES

FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT



Gabriel Escontías, Jr. EdD greet you and hope that you will enjoy this newest edition of Milestones.

While this past year has presented many challenges, it has brought many gifts as well. We continue to support lifelong educational success for our families through our two-generation family literacy program called LEAF, through our Billie Gannaway, William O. Smith and Ivey Stepping Higher scholarships and through our TwoGenEd Affinity Group. There are impact details about all these activities in this issue.

As the holidays approach, we wish you good health and a peace-filled life now and throughout the New Year.

Gabriel Escontías, Jr.

WHAT YOU HELP US ACHIEVE: LEAF

The past school year saw us scrambling to learn how best to deliver our program through distance learning (DL). In August of 2020, we held our enrollment to ten families per site with the hope of returning in person within a few months. Ten is a manageable number for physical distancing and other COVID protocols. Unfortunately, we spent the entire 2020-2021 school year online with our children and families. Fortunately, and to our great surprise, most students still met all their Teaching Strategies Gold benchmarks and were ready to begin Kindergarten! The beginning of this 2021-2022 school year is all about bringing our children back into the classroom in as safe and as meaningful a way as possible. Both sites have children back in-person! There are more details about this in our website blog. Please take a look there.



A LEAF preschooler planting seeds at Bret Tarver Isaac site.

WHAT YOU HELP US ACHIEVE: Scholarship

It is honor to report that we awarded \$44,300 in scholarships to 37 former Stepping Stone LEAF preschoolers! That includes 36 Billie Gannaway awards, five \$1,000 Ivey Stepping Higher awards and two \$5,000 William O. Smith awards. Since 2001, we have awarded 138 distinct students \$318,500. For a complete scholarship report, please go to our website and click on <https://astepingstone.org/blog/post-secondary-impact>.

A
STEPPING STONE
Foundation

MESSAGES

From the Stepping Stone Office



Cynthia Gattorna, MA

Planting Seeds for the Future

This is a growing year. It's why on page one,

I chose a beautiful preschool child planting in the Bret Tarver Isaac Preschool garden. We plant seeds when we serve her and her family and A Stepping Stone Foundation is planting seeds by implementing multiple organizational developments.

Whether it is our ARPA funding request, which would help with COVID mitigation and allow us to expand our LEAF program, or how we have invested our windfall bequest into our internal capacity by hiring a full-time Director of Develop-

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ment (see article below), we are, as Bill Smith and the Shadow Rock Church community who gave birth to us say, "intentionally pointed toward the future".

I am happy to announce another significant development. We were very recently awarded an in-kind grant from the Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust to upgrade our customer management system with two years of paid software, coaching and support through their Jumpstart Program.

You, dear supporters, are crucial to this growing season and we are so very grateful for your continued support!

Cindy

602-670-0599

Meet Jon Williams, Director of Development

ASSF welcomes Jon Williams, our new Director of Development, to our family! He has a lengthy career in many development roles and during that time, he has consistently raised the needed funding and awareness to make a difference for the community organizations he has served.



Most recently, he was the Fund Development Officer for the Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Phoenix and served as Development Manager for United Food Bank in Mesa. Jon has also worked with the American Cancer Society, the American Diabetes Association, the Food Bank of Northern Indiana and St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance in Phoenix. He has a B.S. in Business Administration from Ball State University in Muncie, IN and has lived in the Phoenix area for over 15 years. Originally from South Bend, IN, Jon currently lives in Chandler.

"It is a distinct honor and privilege to be a part of A Stepping Stone Foundation, working for the success of our preschoolers and families at this important time in ASSF history. The need is certainly great and the opportunity for growth and continued success for the ASSF program is very exciting to be a part of moving into the future."

A Stepping Stone Board

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Cynthia Gattorna, MA

cindy@astepplingstone.org

Director of Development

Jon Williams

jon@astepplingstone.org

Office Contact

Tel: 602-843-8281

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WHO AND WHAT'S NEW

Welcome New Board Members



Melissa Lempke, originally from Grafton, WI currently lives in Phoenix. She is in Marketing and Communications with the MAVEN project in Phoenix. She remembers vacationing in Vancouver, BC fondly, but closer to home, you can find her doing her workout routine and making a new batch of baked items! Melissa joined the ASSF board because “I have been connected to A Stepping Stone Foundation for a long time and I admire the mission and the resilience of the organization. I also firmly believe that access to quality early learning opportunities is critical to a child's future success in school. If we want to improve education outcomes in Arizona, we must make sure all students start kindergarten ready to succeed.”

Andrew Wallace is originally from Charleston, WV, and currently lives in Tempe. He is a Senior Financial Analyst for Equality Health in Phoenix. He loves to travel but cannot choose a favorite location because there are too many to choose from. Closer to home, he enjoys the outdoors - close to a body of water, or with a set of golf clubs, or just with his guitar! Andrew joined the ASSF board to, “serve an organization that creates lasting impact in the communities we serve, to promote equality, and to leverage my professional skills and experience in a way that adds unique value to ASSF”.



Gary Williams is originally from Price, UT, but currently lives in Mesa. Gary is a self-employed CPA and joined the ASSF Board earlier this year. A favorite place he has visited is Israel and the City of Jerusalem. He loves to do a little gardening at his home in Mesa. Gary joined the ASSF board because “education is important and getting parental buy in is crucial for student success”.



More New Board Members on p. 6



SERENATA 2021

The 13th annual Serenata fundraiser for A Stepping Stone Foundation took place on Saturday, October 16th at the Old Main Ballroom on the ASU Tempe Campus. This annual event, last held in the spring of 2019, returned this year with a program

of quality entertainment, brunch food and drink.

ASSF presented our annual Community Impact Awards with motivational speeches from our award nominees. Attendees enjoyed a great silent auction, call to action, and lots of comradery between old and new friends – all to raise money and awareness for our preschoolers and families.

Serenata 2021 netted over \$60,000, the most in Serenata history, due to our generous and passionate attendees and supporters across the Valley. Our Honorary Chair, Alfredo J. Molina, of Molina Fine Jewelers, along with our major sponsors, Valley Toyota Dealers, Varitec and the Arizona Community Foundation ensured the success of this event through their support.

Special thanks to our Serenata steering committee, including event and board chair Gabriel Escontrias, Jr., ASSF Executive Director Cynthia Gattorna, ASSF Board Members Melissa Lempke, Melissa Ogea, Kevin Reilly and Tomas Martinez, and ASSF Director of Development Jon Williams.



Pictured Above: Award winners Rep. Lorenzo Sierra and Rhonda Cagle with Rep. Aaron Lieberman at Serenata.



Pictured Above: Honorary Chair Alfredo J. Molina with Award winner Tony Astorga and Renea Molina

A Stepping Stone Foundation Mission

To provide stepping stones of success through education to families of limited opportunities.

LEAF Program

All Families Participate in:

- Early Childhood Education
- Parenting Education
- Adult Literacy (GED/ESL)
- Home Visiting
- Intergenerational Activities
- Childcare as needed



Scholarship Program

- Billie Gannaway Memorial Scholarship
- Ivey Stepping Higher Scholarship
- William O. Smith Scholarship
- Stepping Into College Event
- Scholarship Award Reception



Other A Stepping Stone Programs

- TwoGenEd Affinity Group Quarterly Meetings
- Internship program for former preschoolers seeking employment



Qualified Charitable Tax Credits and Deductions

You can donate and possibly claim an **Arizona Charitable Tax Credit** for your ASSF donation. Individual donors can claim up to a \$400 tax credit and couples can claim up to an \$800 tax credit as a dollar for dollar match on their AZ Taxes. In addition to the **AZ Qualified Charitable Organization Credit**, the **Federal CARES Act** has been extended and increased for 2021. Even if a taxpayer does not itemize on the federal return, a single taxpayer can deduct \$300 and married taxpayers can deduct \$600 with a donation to ASSF **prior to December 31, 2021**. Utilize our **AZ QCO# 20448** on your AZ state return for the tax credit. Please consult your tax professional to discuss your individual tax situation and eligibility and **THANK YOU** for your donation.

So Many Ways to Support Our Children and Families!

Ways to support A Stepping Stone Foundation

Your cash contribution is the most powerful way to support ASSF and then tell everyone you know so they can do the same—your passion is contagious! Here are some additional ways to assist ASSF in the funding of programs and the mission of helping preschoolers and families in two generation learning.

Birdies for Charity—Pledge your donation and a 10% match by Thunderbirds Charities will be added - over \$80,000 received in 2021 by ASSF. Register at www.birdiesforcharityaz.com by 2/1/2022.

Amazon Smile—Shop on Amazon? By enrolling and naming us as your beneficiary, you create a donation every time you buy on Amazon.

Fry's Community Rewards Card—link your rewards card to ASSF for our reward! Register at frysfood.com.

Donate through your employer—ASSF participates in United Way (Donor Choice # 0962) and SECC (State of AZ Employees Combined Campaign). **Find out about your employer's program and if they will match your individual donation** to A Stepping Stone Foundation.

Are you 70 1/2 or older and need to take an RMD (Required Minimum Distribution)? You may avoid paying taxes on your distribution by donating it directly to ASSF. Contact your tax advisor.

Include A Stepping Stone Foundation in **your will** or to leave a **legacy gift** for the next generation!

Our Theory of Action in Pictures: upper right, a Burmese family at our spring celebration receives their LEAF certificate; bottom right, a former preschooler receiving his scholarship award; and bottom left, a former preschooler volunteering in our preschool classroom.

They Talk About It We DO it!



Research by Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman showed that every \$1 invested in quality early childhood programs can yield returns between \$4 and \$16 to society at large.

Our Theory of Action

If children from families with low levels of literacy engage in language-rich, daily pre-school experiences, then they will be kindergarten ready, have success in kindergarten, read proficiently by third grade, graduate high school, and attain postsecondary education at a higher rate than their peers.

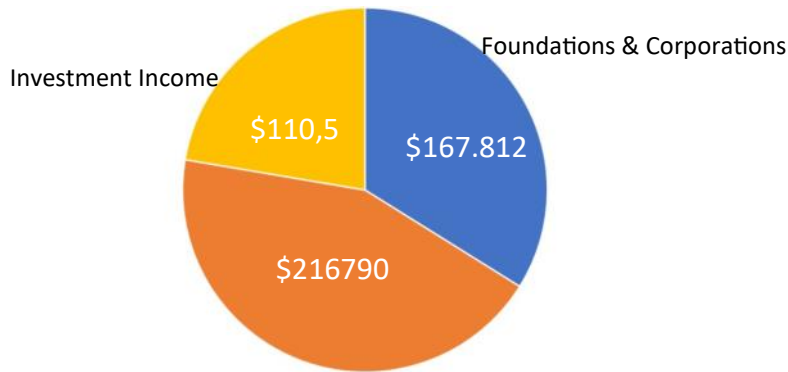


A STEPPING STONE FOUNDATION FINANCES

These charts are based on 2021 Audited Financials provided by our external auditor Fester Chapman

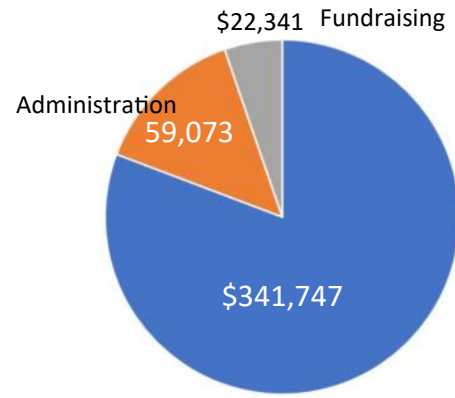
TOTAL NET ASSETS as of JUNE 30, 2021 (Including Scholarship Fund) was \$1,352,873

ASSF Audited 2021 Income \$523,384



Individual Contributions = \$216,790

ASSF Audited 2021 Expenses \$423,161



LEAF & Scholarship = \$341,747

New Board Members continued from p. 3



Kevin Reilly is originally from Chandler, and currently lives in Phoenix. Kevin is currently a Web Developer in Education Technology with Savvas Learning Co. and has joined the ASSF Board earlier this year. Kevin's favorite travel location is Iceland, but when here in the Valley, he prefers gardening as his favorite hobby! "I value early education and wanted to give back to my community" says Kevin about why he wanted to join the ASSF Board.



Introducing our newest ASSF Board member Shannon Warner. Shannon, originally from Mesa, currently lives in Gilbert and is the Managing Director Operations Business Banking at JP Morgan Chase and has just joined the ASSF Board this Fall. Shannon still remembers her favorite vacation to India in 2019, but when she isn't travelling, she loves to cook! Shannon joined the ASSF board because "Both of my parents were teachers, junior high and high school so we grew up with a passion for education. We understand not everyone has the same starting point and how key early education and parent involvement makes a difference."

THANK YOU TO OUR MANY SUPPORTERS!

We are so grateful to all our donors. The following list of supporters includes those who have given cash donations from July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021. Some donors have asked to remain anonymous and a list of memorials, celebrations and in-kind donors can be found on the last page of our newsletter.

Names in bold represent contributions of \$1,000 or more.

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Watch our website for exciting
information about our
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October 2022



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