

# People Saving Special Places







Whitewater SP (top left) & Voyageurs NP (top right) photos courtesy of Gary Alan Nelson. William O'Brien SP (bottom) photo courtesy of Rudi Hargesheimer.

## Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota Annual Report 2011



Illgen Falls. Photo courtesy of Rudi Hargesheimer.

## **Our Mission:**

To acquire, protect and enhance critical lands for the public's enjoyment now and in the future.

## **Our Vision:**

We envision an interconnected system of parks, trails, waterways, natural areas and open spaces that provide all Minnesotans with outstanding outdoor recreational opportunities and that preserve the natural diversity of our state.



Steve Thorne



**Brett Feldman** 

### Dear Friends,

Each year our work to preserve parks and trails is marked by unique projects. This year, the focus was on ensuring that key land, which was acquired in previous years, got put into the public parks and trails system. This is truly the most satisfying part of our work—when all the behind the scenes efforts pay off and Minnesotan's gain access to places where they can connect with the outdoors. The highlight of the year was our work in facilitating a critical new addition of 100 acres to William O'Brien State Park, which you can read about on page four.

Sometimes this process of securing and transferring land unfolds over the course of a few weeks and other times it can take years. Our ability to hold land in trust is part of what makes the Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota so invaluable to the process of adding new parks and trails land. We can move quickly to secure land that goes up for sale and then facilitate the process of getting that land into parks and trails. This is what we have done since 1954.

While we continue strong in this work, this last year tested our state's parks and trails system. General Fund support for parks and trails is diminishing. As you can read about on page six, state parks took a 17-percent cut from the General Fund in 2011 (a major source of parks funding). As a State, we are being challenged to stand up for the importance of preserving land that connects people to the outdoors. You will also see on page 6 that we had some victories, but we know we have our work cut out for us in reversing the trend in spending cuts in the future.

Throughout our work, member support is what keeps us going. Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota started because visionaries saw the need for an organization that works to preserve Minnesota land for parks and trails. Today we continue because our visionary members see this work must go on. Thank you for your support.

Steve Thorne, President

Brett Feldman, Executive Director

Brett Feldman

## **Land Acquisition**

THE PARKS & TRAILS COUNCIL OF MINNESOTA works to acquire, protect and enhance land that is critical to our state's park and recreational trail systems so that Minnesota's scenic, ecological and cultural character can be preserved for the public's enjoyment now and in the future. Since 1954, we have been instrumental in adding more than 10,100 acres valued at more than \$31 million to key areas within the state's vast network of parks and trails.



The newest babbling brook at William O'Brien State Park came as part of the addition Parks & Trails Council worked for.



Roe Family Singers play during the O'Bigger, O'Better, O'Brien event on May 7.



Parks & Trails Council supporters enjoyed a naturalist hike at the O'Bigger, O'Better, O'Brien event.

### William O'Brien State Park

On May 7, the Parks & Trails Council held an "O'Bigger, O'Better, O'Brien" party to celebrate the transfer of nearly 100 acres of private property to William O'Brien State Park in Marine on St. Croix. With this additional acreage, the park is now about 10 times larger than when it was created in 1947—now, in total, nearly 60% of the 1,750 acres in William O'Brien State Park was acquired by the Parks & Trails Council. The celebration, attended by about 150 people, included a wildflower hike, tours, children's crafts, fishing, music, raffle and silent auction.

The 100-acre property, which is located within William O'Brien State Park, was sold to the Parks & Trails Council in December 2010 by Joan Grant and her children, Hendrie and Ann. The land was a summer retreat for the Grant family for 70 years. Now, park visitors will enjoy new views from atop the bluffs of the St. Croix River on land that contains some of the best remnant native prairie near the Twin Cities, as well as springs, woods, and a trout pond. The Grant family home was sold, along with 5 acres of land, to a preservation-minded buyer who now lives in the house.

The transferred land also enhances efforts to protect the watershed. Park staff have a resource protection effort on lands to the west of the newly added parcel and in the adjacent Nine Spring area. These efforts will now continue onto the new land.

A grant from the Alice M. O'Brien Foundation helped make the property sale possible and the Grant Family also made a generous \$100,000 donation to the Parks & Trails Council's Samuel Morgan Land Fund. The Parks & Trails Council has been creating, protecting and enhancing parks and trails throughout Minnesota since 1954.

At the celebration, Joan Grant talked about raising her family in a house on the property. "The only thing I do regret is that I didn't spend more time in William O'Brien State Park."

Steve Thorne, president of the Parks & Trails Council in 2011, said the park is "an example of the partnership of public-spirited individuals, the Parks & Trails Council and the DNR."

### **KEYTRANSFERS IN 2011**



Voyageurs National Park. Photo courtesy of Gary Alan Nelson

## Voyageurs National Park

In September, the Parks & Trails Council began transferring ownership of 3.4 acres of shoreline in Voyageurs National Park that had been held in trust for the National Park Service since 2007. The property provides high visibility to park visitors entering from Rainy Lake. In preparation for the transfer, volunteers dedicated hours of work in environmental remediation.

### Whitewater State Park

In June, the Parks & Trails Council transferred 17 acres of land next to the visitor center at Whitewater State Park. This land was acquired in 2006. "It takes a lot of effort to buy land," said Steve Young, land acquisition consultant for Parks & Trails Council. "But it takes a lot of effort to sell, too."

## **Gateway State Trail**

A 2.5-acre easement purchased by the Parks & Trails Council in 2009 was transferred to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources in April. This easement, with one more parcel still in private use, will connect downtown Scandia to William O'Brien State Park with a trail.

## Goodhue-Pioneer State Trail

The Parks & Trails Council transferred 10 acres of land to Goodhue Pioneer State Trail resulting in almost a mile of added trail.

## **Land Holdings 2011**

Park/Trail	Value (\$)	Acres	Notes
Crow Wing State Park	300,000	5.54	Purchased in 2008
Crow Wing State Park	260,000	7.10	Purchased in 2008
Cuyuna Lakes State Trail	19,260	9.25	Easement
Gateway State Trail	0	0.80	Easement
Scenic State Park	335,000	138.00	Purchased in 2009
Superior Hiking Trail	0	40.00	
Tettegouche State Park	380,000	57.50	Purchased in 2008
Transferred to DNR in 2011	1,643,897	131.60	
Transferred to NPS in 2011	287,300	3.60	
Our total holdings (end 2011)	1,294,260	258.19	

## The Samuel H. Morgan Land Acquisition Fund

Samuel Huntington Morgan (1911–2000) was a tireless advocate for public parks and trails. He dedicated nearly 40 years of service to the Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota and its predecessors, the Minnesota Council of Parks and the Minnesota Parks Foundation. He was the longest-serving president in the Parks & Trails Council's history and had served in various capacities on the board from 1962 until his death in 2000.

Even today, Morgan's influence is important to the state's parks and trails. This year's purchase of just under 100 acres in William O'Brien State Park occurred in part because the owners, Joan and Hendrie Grant, were neighbors, friends and admirers of Morgan.

Shortly after Morgan died, the Parks & Trails Council established the Samuel H. Morgan Land Acquisition Fund to honor his extraordinary vision and leadership in helping create Minnesota's world-class park and trail systems. The fund functions as a revolving account that gets spent many times over to acquire critical lands for parks and trails.

To make a donation to the Samuel H. Morgan Land Acquisition Fund, use the enclosed envelope or donate online at www.parksandtrails.org.

## Thanks to our volunteer attorneys in 2011

In 2011, the Parks & Trails Council transferred ownership of land valued at \$1.9 million to public park and trail agencies. Because the Parks & Trails Council has no attorney on staff, generous attorneys donate their time to handle much of the legal work involved in these transactions. We especially thank the attorneys and law firms who showed their commitment in 2011 by contributing pro-bono legal expertise: Jeff Benson, Fredrickson & Byron; Kathleen Connelly; Andy Jacobson and Marty Fallon, Maslon Edelman Borman & Brand; Dave Magnuson, Magnuson Law Firm; and Ken Rowe, Oppenheimer Wolff & Donnelly.

## **Government Relations**

THE PARKS & TRAILS COUNCIL OF MINNESOTA'S ability to effectively communicate the needs of the state's park and trail systems and its users to legislators and government officials has made it the preeminent voice for parks and trails throughout Minnesota and at the Capitol. Always determined and forward-thinking, the Parks & Trails Council heads into each legislative session armed with a comprehensive agenda seeking necessary and smart investments in our park and trail systems. The Parks & Trails Action Team is made up of dedicated people who actively work on behalf of our state's interconnected system of parks and trails.

## Rough year for parks and trails—and most government funding

When Gov. Mark Dayton signed 12 bills into law at the end of a special legislative session on July 20, it marked the end of a divisive partisan budget showdown and the conclusion to a 20-day state government shutdown.

Overall, state parks took a 17 percent General Fund cut (\$6.3 million for the 2012-2013 biennium)—an amount nearly equal to the General Fund cuts sustained over the previous 10 years combined. Lawmakers tried to supplement the cuts with one-time funds from other sources like the Legislative-Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR), but couldn't make up for the nearly \$3 million in lost revenue that would have been generated by state park visitors during the three-week government shutdown.

A bonus, of sorts, was that the agreement to end the state shutdown included a \$46.2 million Parks and Trails Legacy Fund appropriation, a \$25.3 million Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund appropriation and a \$500 million bonding bill with several important investments in parks and trails, including:

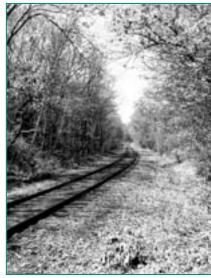
- \$17 million for state park and trail asset preservation, including key funds to rebuild at St. Croix State Park following significant storm damage.
- \$8 million to begin developing the new Lake Vermilion State Park.
- \$5.8 million for state trail acquisition and development that benefits the Brown's Creek State Trail, the Blazing Star State Trail, the Gitchi Gami State Trail, the Glacial Lakes State Trail, the Paul Bunyan State Trail and the Shooting Star State Trail.
- \$5 million for capital improvements in Metropolitan regional parks and trails.

The odd years of a biennium traditionally don't include bonding, so the bonding bill that was part of the agreement allowed several bonding projects to move forward.

The Parks & Trails Council's Action Team stayed apprised of legislative events as they occurred, and alerted legislators to the importance of both keeping parks open during the key outdoor recreation season and to funding them appropriately.



Gitchi Gami State Trail



Brown's Creek State Trail

## Day on the Hill 2011

An estimated 80 people came out to Parks & Trails Council's 2011 Day on the Hill to talk with their legislators about the importance of our public natural spaces. This annual event gives those who support the state's parks and trails the opportunity to network with others, get legislative updates and hear directly from key leaders—as well as offer their ideas to legislators.



Members from the Lanesboro Chamber of Commerce, Root River Trail Group, and Rushford Area Chamber of Commerce met with Rep. Greg Davids (R-Preston, Chair of House Taxes Committee) to advocate for parks and trails.



Day on the Hill participants got involved during a networking breakfast.

## Speaking out to keep parks funded

In 2011, the Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota was active in alerting the public to severe funding cuts to parks and trails. The Council worked on several fronts, including interviews with news media, emails to our action alert team, and newsletter updates to members.

The Parks & Trails Council stood up when a bill was proposed that would have allowed large, Black Walnut trees to be cut and sold to fund parks. In an interview with the St. Paul Pioneer Press and the Minneapolis Star-Tribune, Brett Feldman, executive director of Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota explained, "it's counter-intuitive to think that we have to cut down all the trees to pay for the park."



Parks and Trails Legacy Plan presented by Courtland Nelson, DNR director of Parks and Trails Division in Capitol Rotunda. Members of the steering committee stand at right, including president Steve Thorne (far right).

Implementation of the 2008 Legacy Amendment was another issue addressed in 2011. The Parks & Trails Council worked to represent members' concerns about Legacy Amendment projects through its role on the DNR's Parks and Trails Legacy Plan. Steve Thorne, president of Parks & Trails Council helped present the report during a news conference in the Capitol Rotunda. The 70-page report will guide spending of the Legacy funds through 2034, when the funds cease to be available.

Additionally, on the Legacy Amendment front, the Parks & Trails Council joined 65 other conservation and outdoors groups in signing a letter delivered to Minnesota legislative leaders and Gov. Mark Dayton in February 2011. The letter urged leaders to honor the intent of the Legacy Amendment by using Legacy revenue for new projects rather than as a way to fund projects traditionally funded through the General Fund.

## Member support keeps our voice strong

The Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota remains steadfast in our determination to advocate for the benefits of parks and trails in our State. The work of preserving treasured places for the future continues. With the support of our members we remain a strong voice at the Capitol.

## **Membership & Development**

DONOR AND MEMBER GENEROSITY for the past 57 years has enabled the Parks & Trails Council to acquire and protect more than 10,000 acres for public parks and trails. Thanks to this ongoing support, Minnesotans today and tomorrow can enjoy pristine rivers and creeks, quiet stands of oaks and shorelines teeming with wildlife—as well as naturalistled learning opportunities, well maintained trails for hiking, riding and skiing and sturdy camper cabins and clean campsites to gather with friends and family. These special places are preserved for everyone to enjoy.



DNR commissioner Tom Landwehr



Peter Seed (far left) received the Reuel Harmon award from (left to right) past-president Tim Farrell, executive director Brett Feldman, and president Steve Thorne.



Kathy Connelly received an award from Parks & Trails executive director Brett Feldman.

### 57th Annual Dinner features new DNR commissioner

About 200 Parks & Trails Council members and supporters applauded DNR Commissioner Tom Landwehr when he stated clearly: "If I'm told to supplant, rather than supplement (with Legacy dollars) we will refuse to do that."

Landwehr was the featured speaker at the Parks & Trails Council's annual dinner on March 29. He told the group that the cuts then being proposed for parks and trails would have to be "mothballed" and others would have their seasons cut short. He encouraged members to speak with one voice alongside hunters, fishers and other environmental organizations.

Peter Seed was awarded the Reuel Harmon award at the dinner, for groundbreaking legal work that helped create the Gateway State Trail. When the Soo Line Railroad abandoned its track by Peter Seed's home in Grant, he and his family began to hike and ski along the tracks. He soon realized it would make a great state trail. Adjacent homeowners, however, were concerned and bid against the DNR and local governments and citizen groups to purchase the land.

Seed worked with his boss, Sam Morgan, at the Briggs and Morgan law firm, to develop a theory, confirmed by the Minnesota Supreme Court, that the land does not go back to the property owners as long as it continues to be used for public purpose, such as a recreational trail.

Other people important to the Parks & Trails Council were recognized at the dinner:

- Attorneys Ken Rowe, Jeff Benson and Kathy Connelly received awards for their many hours of free legal work on behalf of the Parks & Trails Council in various land acquisitions.
- New board members elected were Kathy Bonnifield, Keith Fester, Julie Gugin, Verónica Jaralambides, Mary Merrill Anderson and Tom Stoa.
- Presenting sponsor of the evening was Briggs and Morgan with supporting sponsors Great River Energy, QBP, Erik's Bike Shop, and Minnesota Trails. Raffle prizes were donated by Patagonia of St. Paul, Chianti Grill/Porterhouse, and several St. Paul authors.



Late in 2004, the Parks & Trails Council launched a program named in honor of the organization's founder and Minnesota State Parks champion, Judge Clarence Magney. Now all members can step up in support of parks and trails in the tradition of Judge Magney by making an annual contribution of \$500 or more to general operations.

The Magney Circle offers an invaluable base of support. In addition to providing funds that we can use where most urgently needed, donations from Magney Circle members also inspire others to give. We are thrilled to list 76 members or households as Magney contributors in 2011. To them, a special thank you!

## Supporters double your gift

A group of Parks & Trails Council supporters issued a \$20,000 challenge match. Members who made a donation above and beyond what they had given to Parks & Trails Council in 2010 or who gave gift memberships to others, had their donations doubled through the match.

### Online contest winner

In December, the Parks & Trails Council was honored with a \$10,000 grant from Midwest Mountaineering as part of their Wildlands Acquistion online voting contest. The grant will help make the Mill Towns Trail project possible.

## Bridging the Trail Gap initiative

The 2010 Minnesota Legislature authorized spending \$21.4 million for state trails, but then Gov. Tim Pawlenty eliminated the funding with his line-item veto, meaning no state funding for trail projects, despite strong citizen support and hard work by the Parks & Trails Council.

To make sure that the land for these trail acquisitions was not lost to public use forever, the Parks & Trails Council created the Bridging the Trail Gap Initiative to help provide the resources to secure the most vital trail connections. Funds were allocated through the Parks & Trails Council's Samuel H. Morgan Land Acquisition Fund.

"We couldn't stand by while important trail connections hung in the balance," said Brett Feldman, executive director of the Parks & Trails Council.

The Bridging the Trail Gap initiative raised \$20,000 from our membership and has so far benefitted three trails: Mill Towns State Trail, Scandia area trails, and Shooting Star State Trail.



Brett Feldman, executive director of Parks & Trails (2nd from right) awards a "Bridging the Trail Gap" grant to Friends of Scandia Parks and Trails.

## People making parks and trails

The support of our newest friends and renewing members alike is a sustaining force in the well being of Minnesota's parks and trails. The dedication of 3,400 members statewide inspires the Parks & Trails Council to advocate for protected natural spaces. Members offer gifts of money, time, testimony and action. Whether volunteering at educational workshops and events in every corner of the state or rallying their neighbors and fellow residents to contact their legislators, our members are out making parks and trails happen! Their willingness to give freely for the well being of all Minnesotans is admirable, and we are grateful.

## **Community Partners**

THE PARKS & TRAILS COUNCIL values the creative ideas and energy that individual members and local groups bring to park and trail efforts. A statewide organization, the Parks & Trails Council serves as a hub for this energy. We are the coordinator that links individual efforts together and the conduit that brings knowledge gained on a project in one region to a developing idea in another one. The Parks & Trails Council attends local planning meetings in communities throughout the state and hosts workshops and a Labor Day bike and camping adventure. In 2011, we continued to strengthen our vital Community Partners.



Bike Minnesota with Parks & Trails participants on the Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail.



Bike Minnesota with Parks & Trails event participants at a stop in Elysian, MN.

## Seventh annual Bike Minnesota with Parks & Trails

In what has become an important and lively tradition, 75 riders took part in the seventh annual Bike Minnesota with Parks & Trails event over Labor Day weekend. Riders biked 35 to 60 miles each day, learning about the geography, ecology and history of the Nerstrand Big Woods area—and enjoying the weather and conversation with new and old friends.

Minnesota Appeals Court Judge David Minge (now retired), the key planner and leader of the annual event, said longtime Parks & Trails member and volunteer Peggy Prowe had urged him to take the bicycle tour to the Nerstrand area. "This year, everything came together to make it possible," he said. "We had good roads, good weather, good camping, good food and wonderful fellowship."

"My wife and I were very impressed by this year's Bike MN Ride," said participant Greg Lauer. "We loved the camaraderie at the campground and on the trail; and without exception, our fellow riders were super-friendly and helpful. Overall, it was a wonderful weekend for our family—we're eager to return in 2012!"

## The power of volunteers

Each year, the Parks & Trails Council depends on volunteers to donate their time to support the few staff. In 2011, there were several opportunities for volunteers to spend time with the staff, meet potential members and work on campaigns. "Our volunteers are essential to the success of the Parks & Trails Council," said Brett Feldman, executive director. "I'm always impressed by how much people are willing to do for the future of our parks and trails system, whether it's providing

legal services, staffing a booth at Midwest Mountaineering's Outdoor Expos, or assisting with mailings in the office. Our volunteers are truly dedicated and appreciated."

See our list of volunteers on page 15.

## **Financial Health**

### 2011 Statement of Activities

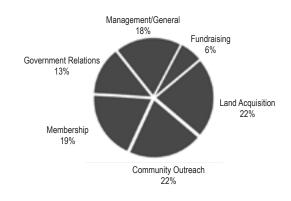
Support & Revenue	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Total
Grants & Contributions	\$ 224,643	\$ 265,000	\$ 489,643
Membership Dues	140,809	-	140,809
Special Events (net expenses of \$23,536)	3,622	-	3,622
Investment Income	17,034	-	(17,034)
Loss on Sale of Property	(96,880)	-	$(96,880)^a$
Other Income	3,721	-	3,721
Satisfaction of Program Restrictions	15,000	(15,000)	_
Total Support & Revenue	373,881	250,000	523,881
Expense			
Program Services	380,016	-	380,016
Management & General	92,533	-	92,533
Fundraising	31,105	-	31,105
Total Expense	503,654	-	503,654
Change in Net Assets	(229,773)	250,000	20,227
Net Assets (Beginning of Year)	7,073,385	15,000	7,088,385
Net Assets (End of Year)	6,843,612	265,000	7,108,612

(a) Parks & Trails Council holds land in trust for public partners. Occassionally land values decline by the time of sale. This lost value is absorbed by the Council's land fund.

### **Statements of Financial Position**

Assets	2011	2010
Cash & Cash Equivalents	\$ 3,976,151	\$ 1,914,805
Investments	1,670,813	1,757,372
All Receivables	133,167	36,908
Contract for Deed	2,717	2,621
Prepaid Expenses	10,387	11,397
Equipment (Net)	-	1,870
Protected Property	1,479,507	3,522,286
Insurance Policy	68,808	65,220
Contract for Deed	148,131	150,711
Total Assets	7,507,681	7,463,190
Liabilities & Net Assets		
Accounts Payable	12,333	7,061
Accrued Expenses	4,227	4,349
Notes Payable	228,054	217,650
Funds Held for Others	165,455	145,745
Total Liabilties	399,069	374,805
Net Assets		
Unrestricted	6,843,612	7,073,385
Temporarilty Restricted	265,000	15,000
Total Net Assets	7,108,612	7,088,385
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	7,507,681	7,463,190

## **Expenses by Activity**



Fund Balances	2011	2010
General Fund (Unrestricted)	\$ 674,067	\$ 613,362
Samuel H. Morgan Land Acquisition Fund <sup>b</sup>	4,897,801	5,077,456
Reuel Harmon Endowment Fund <sup>e</sup>	1,670,813	1,757,372
Temporarily Restricted <sup>d</sup>	265,000	15,000
Total	7,507,681	7,463,190

<sup>(</sup>b) The SHMLA Fund is a revolving account that covers acquistion costs and is reimbursed when land is transfered to a public agency.

<sup>(</sup>c) The RHE Fund provides up to 5% of its balance annually for General Operations.

<sup>(</sup>d) Temporarily restricted funds in 2011 will be applied to the SHMLA Fund upon fulfillment of grant obligations.

## **Special Thanks to Our Supporters**

THE PARKS & TRAILS COUNCIL OF MINNESOTA is supported solely by private donations and is grateful to all the individuals, community organizations, corporations and foundations that provided financial support in 2011. We would like to thank the following donors who have made gifts of \$100 or more in 2011. If you believe your name should be on this list, please contact the office so we can promptly add you to the list.

Magney Circle

Recognizing individuals who made an outright gift of \$500 or more to general operating funds in 2011

Anonymous A. Lloyd Alm Bruce and Martha Atwater Bruce Blackburn Peter and Nancy Breyfogle Conley and Marney Brooks Paul H. Brown Mr. and Mrs. William R. Buell Peter K. Butler Gary R. Carlson Lockwood and Darlene Carlson David Chizek Kathleen A. Connelly and Carolyn J. Sampson Dominique Conseil and Misato Sakai Mike and Julia Costello David and Kitty Crosby Thomas and Ellie Crosby

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### Individual, Corporation & Foundation Donors

Recognizing those who made gifts to general operating funds and/or the Samuel Morgan Land Fund in 2011

### \$5,000 and more

3M Foundation Carolyn Foundation Mary Lee Dayton Great River Energy Horton, Inc. Midwest Mountaineering, Inc. Minnesota Environmental Fund Katherine M. Nielsen Patrick & Aimee Butler Family Foundation Peter and Linda Seed State of Minnesota - Dept of Finance Fred and Eleanor Winston WM Foundation The Halleck Fund

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Brett Feldman and Elizabeth Haugen

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Rupert and Jeanne Strobel The Drea Alm Foundation of The

Saint Paul Foundation The Martin and Esther Kellogg Fund of The Saint Paul Foundation

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Anonymous Bruce Blackburn Peter and Nancy Breyfogle Paul H. Brown Mr. and Mrs. William R. Buell Peter K. Butler Lockwood and Darlene Carlson Michael R. Conley Kathleen A. Connelly and Carolyn J. Sampson

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Steven L. Young

#### \$100-\$499

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