



**Minnesota Initiative Foundations Celebrate 25 Years of Making Minnesota Greater**  
*Governor Dayton Proclaims June 10, 2011 as Minnesota Initiative Foundations Day*  
(June 10, 2011)

The Northland Foundation along with the other five Minnesota Initiative Foundations are celebrating a quarter century of partnerships and service to help rural Minnesota communities thrive. On June 9-10, 2011, the Boards of Trustees and leadership of the Minnesota Initiative Foundations will gather in Nisswa, Minnesota, for a two-day retreat and silver anniversary celebration. Governor Mark Dayton will also proclaim Friday, June 10, 2011 as Minnesota Initiative Foundations Day.

The Minnesota Initiative Foundations (MIFs) were created in 1986 by The McKnight Foundation, Minnesota's largest private foundation, in response to the drastic decline in the farming, logging, and mining industries in the 1980s. The idea was to launch six independent foundations directed by local leaders, who would direct a unique combination of grants, business loans, and staff assistance to projects that could stimulate and diversify the struggling rural economy.

“The Minnesota Initiative Foundations hit the ground running in 1986, and they haven't slowed down. Every year, they forge dynamic new collaborations and help define the spirits of giving, of innovation, and of engagement that are hallmarks of our state. They stand collectively among The McKnight Foundation's proudest and farthest reaching legacies — both for the progress they have made and for the promises they hold,” says Kate Wolford, President of The McKnight Foundation.

Today these six philanthropic organizations work in Minnesota's 80 rural counties to make their regions stronger and more prosperous. The Northland Foundation serves the northeastern Minnesota counties of Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake and St. Louis with a Grant Program, Business Finance Program, KIDS PLUS Program, Assisted Living and other special initiatives.

The MIFs promote economic and community development; build the leadership and planning capacity of local communities; coordinate and leverage resources; and stimulate local giving throughout Greater Minnesota. They are recognized across the nation for their significant accomplishments in building strong, sustainable rural communities. Over 25 years, they

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collectively have awarded in excess of 23,000 grants to nonprofit organizations totaling more than \$140 million. In addition they have made 3,649 loans to businesses totaling \$193 million, which have supported the creation and retention of nearly 40,000 jobs in Greater Minnesota. Together, the foundations' endowments now equal more than \$191 million, with business financing assets of \$55 million.

Tom Renier, founding President of the Northland Foundation, states, "Looking back at the process we underwent to form the Minnesota Initiative Foundations, I'm confident that none of us then could have predicted that we would grow to have such incredible impact statewide. It has been a privilege to be part of 25 years of progress, and to see all six foundations well positioned to serve Greater Minnesota for years to come."

#### **ABOUT THE MINNESOTA INITIATIVE FOUNDATIONS**

The Minnesota Initiative Foundations are: the **Northland Foundation** based in Duluth; the **Northwest Minnesota Foundation** located in Bemidji; **West Central Initiative** based in Fergus Falls; the **Southwest Initiative Foundation** in Hutchinson, the **Initiative Foundation** in Little Falls; and the **Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation** in Owatonna. Visit [www.greatermnnesota.net](http://www.greatermnnesota.net) for more information.

#### **ABOUT THE MCKNIGHT FOUNDATION**

The McKnight Foundation seeks to improve the quality of life for present and future generations through grantmaking, coalition-building, and encouragement of strategic policy reform. Founded in 1953 and independently endowed by William and Maude McKnight, the Minnesota-based Foundation had assets of approximately \$1.9 billion and granted about \$96 million in 2010. For more information, visit [www.mcknight.org](http://www.mcknight.org).



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