

Supporting Young Leaders

Ron Griffith Young Leaders Fund: Year 1

By Mary Ellen Frame, Co-op Owner and Ron Griffith Young Leaders Fund Board Member



Fund recipients, from left to right: Kate Wall, Angie Koch, Aaron Wills, Monica Caldwell, and Jennifer Nelson

Has the Ron Griffith Young Leaders Fund inspired any of our young leaders yet? You bet! The mission of the fund is to support and develop the capabilities, talents, and motivation of young adults (under age 35) in the Northfield community. The impact has already been amazing as we work with several grant recipients who are actively involved in providing leadership in areas contributing to long-term sustainability including local environmental initiatives, healthy food and nutrition, sustainable agriculture, and community building.

It has been a fruitful year and a half since the fund was first developed. \$12,280 has been contributed so far and 5 grant recipients have already been hard at work utilizing those funds for the good of us all.

We're on the lookout for more emerging young leaders so feel free to connect with us if you have ideas and suggestions. Here's feedback from the five we've already been able to support.

Kate Wall, Grocery Manager at Just Food, was the first grant recipient. Her grant enabled her to go to a Rising Stars workshop. She said, "I feel like I learned more about managing people in three days than I have in the many years of actually doing it. I am confident those skills and tools I gained will support me in my role at the Co-op."

Angelica Koch, who was the Director of Health Finders attended the Minnesota Council on Foundations Advanced Grant Seeking Seminar. She had already used

her training to secure at least one grant for Health Finders before she accepted a position as the Southern Region Coordinator for Emergency Preparedness with the Minnesota Department of Health.

Aaron Wills, who is Community Sewage Treatment Facilitator for the Cannon River Watershed Project, plans to start farming with his wife, Molly. He was given a grant to enroll in the Land Stewardship Project's Beginning Farmer program, learning about whole farm planning and business management.

Monica Caldwell, an employee of Just Food, is also planning to go into farming. She says "I have experience as an educator, manager, and community builder and I want to use this skill-set to bring students out to the farm for on-farm education opportunities. I also wish to educate the public about healthy foods, the environment, and nutrition through outreach programs. With tuition provided by RGYLF, she recently completed Annie's Project, which teaches women farm management skills.

Jennifer Nelson, recently attended the Midwest Organic Farming Conference in LaCrosse, Wisconsin, with help from the fund. She says "In my role with Gardens of Eagan and the Organic Field School, I have the unique opportunity to assist in creating and fostering programs that offer experiential learning with organically grown food.

The Fund is named in honor of Ron Griffith on the occasion of his retirement from the Just Food Board of Directors to acknowledge

his service to the Just Food Co-op and to the Northfield Community. It is hoped that his experience and example will challenge and inspire future generations of leaders.

The Ron Griffith Young Leaders Fund, initiated by Just Food: Northfield Community Co-op, Inc., reflects a strong community partnership with the Northfield Area Family YMCA and is supported by a number of local organizations and individuals committed to the development

of young leaders in the Northfield community, sustainable agriculture, and environmental initiatives.

You can help to continue assisting young leaders to get training that will benefit the Northfield community for a long time into the future, by contributing to the Ron Griffith Young Leaders Fund. To contribute, or for more information about the fund, please go to: <http://northfieldymca.org/ron-griffith>.



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