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PROGRESS TOWARD WORKFORCE EQUITY FOR A COMPETITIVE ECONOMY

Our ongoing project, *Workforce Equity for a Competitive Economy* will draw strength and synergy from a recent pledge by Governor Mark Dayton to create a new “Office of Career and Business Opportunity,” focused specifically on reducing racial disparities in higher education, workforce, and employment outcomes.

As we noted in op-eds and on social media, Dayton’s move aligns well

with our own efforts, in partnership with many others, to make education and workforce equity the topmost priority for state policy makers, educators, and employers.

Stung by recent reports showing declining income and employment rates for Black Minnesotans during a period of overall economic growth, Dayton confessed that he had not been aggressive enough



Gov. Mark Dayton visits with families served by our education partnership funding success.

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GROWTH & JUSTICE HELPS MINNESOTA INVEST \$6 MILLION IN EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS

Three StriveTogether Collective Impact Partnerships join forces with two Promise Neighborhood Communities to score major legislative win for students across the state.

In 2015, the Minnesota Legislature, as part of the new state K-12 education finance package, appropriated almost \$6 million to support cradle to career partnerships across the state, in both rural and urban communities. The law provides \$1 million over two years to be shared equally by three partnerships in Greater Minnesota—Red Wing, Northfield and St. Cloud—all members of the StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network. Minnesota’s two urban Promise Neighborhood initiatives, the Northside Achievement Zone in Minneapolis and the St. Paul Promise Neighborhood, each will

receive \$1.2 million each year in annual operating grants.

This is the first time a state has invested heavily in the support of the backbone infrastructure that is such a critical component of collective impact. This means that legislators saw that investing a small amount of funds in the human capital and data management capacity needed to understand what education improvement initiatives work is critical to ensure a measurable return on investment.

Rep. Rena Moran (DFL-St. Paul),

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COLLEGE, JOBS & OPPORTUNITY SUMMIT

Growth & Justice has been working with a diverse coalition of students and families with timely workforce and college opportunities, and bring their voices into the policy arena in development of a practical agenda for achieving race equity in postsecondary and workforce participation in Minnesota.

The 2016 College, Jobs & Opportunity Summit is a continuation of work that began in 2014 with many nonprofit and advocacy groups, including Growth & Justice, the Minnesota State Senate, the Minnesota Business Partnership, the Citizens League, the Center for School Change, and the Minnesota Equity Education Partnership.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dane Smith

IT'S ABOUT REAL PEOPLE DOING BETTER

We always need to remind ourselves and our supporters of the real children and real families who benefit from our work, especially since we tend to work with data and policy-makers and highly complex public policy issues.

This human difference we make together when you donate to Growth & Justice can be the difference between a poor infant on Minneapolis' North Side getting early, high-quality, wraparound support aimed at cognitive and social development and eventual college graduation, or that child being left behind and never realizing her or his potential.

Your support for our work can make the difference between a high school dropout having access to state-of-the-art career pathway services that put them on a faster track to a training certificate for a decent job, or that their resignation to a lifetime of low-skilled work and unlivable wages.

These ripple effects from your support of Growth & Justice happen because we are one of the most adept players at building effective partnerships and coalitions, maintaining a persuasive and persistent voice in the media,

framing the debate around growth with justice in Minnesota, and finally, getting very specific things done.

These specific things are almost always backed by other organizations and causes you probably also support. Thus, when you support Growth & Justice with your financial contributions or in other ways, you also are actually advancing a wide array of other equity-minded organizations in Minnesota that work to expand prosperity by reducing inequality and erasing racial disparities.

Here's what we mean, cases in point from our two examples above:

An article on the national StriveTogether website describes in detail how Growth & Justice helped assemble a coalition that secured nearly \$6 million in funding from the 2015 Legislature for five promising community education partnerships in Minnesota. This breakthrough in state funding for local partnerships, the first of its kind in the nation, included the Northside Achievement Zone, the St. Paul Promise Neighborhood, Every Hand Joined in Red Wing, Partner for Student Success in St. Cloud, and Northfield Promise in Northfield. Having these resources literally means the difference between being helped or not helped for thousands of children and low-income families served by those partnerships.

We are also ringleaders and cheerleaders, among many groups, pushing for policies to improve our workforce with sharper focus on eliminating racial disparities, better alignment of higher education and training to jobs in demand, and on pushing credential attainment up for all Minnesotans. Our Workforce Equity for a Competitive Economy Project will be striving hard over the next year to greatly increase "career pathway" funding for high school dropouts and the under-employed in our second example.

At the same time, we stay engaged on the basic building blocks of our progressive state, advocating for revenue sufficiency and fairness and redesigning government for maximum effectiveness. We persist as a founding partner of the Invest in Minnesota Coalition, which is comprised of faith, nonprofit, and labor leadership, including the Joint Religious Legislative Coalition, the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, and the Minnesota AFL-CIO. This coalition has been crucial in building the consensus for a fairer tax system in recent years which we documented this year in a report.

As you give thanks this season for your bounty and blessings, and weigh your giving options, remember that your donations to Growth & Justice actually reinforce your support of other causes and groups focused on reducing inequality and investing in human capital and a sustainable economy.

And above all, we must keep in mind the faces of the real people who will do better because of our efforts. These faces include those we see in the mirror because we all will do better when we ALL do better.

GROWTH & JUSTICE

Growth & Justice is a research and advocacy organization that develops innovative public policy proposals based on independent research and civic engagement. We believe when Minnesota makes **smart investments in practical solutions** it leads to **broader prosperity** for all.

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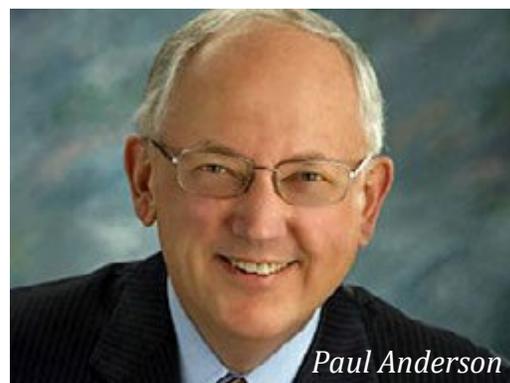
Newsletter design & layout by
Mark Tundel

GROWTH & JUSTICE WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS AND INTERN

Please help Growth & Justice welcome two new members to our Board of Directors, as well as a new intern!

PAUL ANDERSON - BOARD MEMBER

Justice Anderson is one of the longest-serving and most-respected jurists in Minnesota history, having served on both the Appeals Court and the Minnesota Supreme Court. He was first appointed to the Appeals Court by former Republican Governor Arne Carlson, and has a reputation as a thoughtful and independent judicial voice. In retirement he has advocated for criminal justice system reform and racial equity.



Paul Anderson



Tony Carideo

TONY CARIDEO - BOARD MEMBER

Mr. Carideo is former president of the CFA Society of Minnesota, the premier organization for investment professionals in the state. CFA, or Chartered Financial Analyst, is a professional designation that measures the competence and integrity of financial analysts. Candidates are required to pass three levels of exams covering areas such as accounting, economics, ethics, money management and security analysis. Mr. Carideo has been owner or principal of several public relations organizations in recent years and is currently owner and president of the The Carideo Group. His columns frequently appear in Twin Cities business publications.

GEROGE SHARDLOW - INTERN

George Shardlow recently completed a Master of Public Policy at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs. During his time at Humphrey, he served as President of the Public Affairs Student Association and was elected student commencement speaker by his peers. While in school, he interned in legislative affairs with both the Office of State Senator Ann Rest and the Minnesota State Council on Disability.

Prior to graduate school, he worked as a community organizer, first with neighborhood associations in Baltimore and subsequently serving as a Field Organizer for the Obama reelection campaign. He also led community engagement on behalf of the Maryland Transit Administration in the predominantly Latino neighborhoods of Southeast Baltimore. He is a native of Roseville, Minnesota and received his undergraduate education from Luther College in Decorah, Iowa.

George writes about disability and economic development policy for the Growth & Justice blog. His first two blog posts were about unemployment in the disability community and the impact of recent court decisions on disability policy in Minnesota. His work here at Growth & Justice will promote the importance of including disability issues in broader discussions of economic equity.



George Shardlow

MINNESOTA INVESTS \$6 MILLION

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long a champion of the Promise Neighborhoods, said of the bill's passage: "It's awesome." "We always hear about the cities competing with rural Minnesota, but we came together to achieve positive outcomes for children and families throughout the state," she added. "Rural and urban folks can work together. We are the first state to make this happen. It's very innovative."

Dane Smith, president of Growth & Justice, who recently described the Promise Networks and StriveTogether efforts in an op-ed in the Minneapolis Star Tribune, said: "The beauty of these groups is the affirmation of the communitarian way Minnesota does things."

Bruce Watkins, a former school superintendent in St. Cloud, north of the Twin Cities, and now active in Partner for Student Success, summed up the coalition effort this way: "I feel kids are the future of the community and the economy. To have them well-educated and well-trained bodes well for the future of Minnesota. Not to do that would be disastrous."

Lessons Learned: The coalition partners, despite the long hours and the ups and downs of the legislative process, were obviously pleased with the results. But what did they take away from the process for the next time or for others in Minnesota or in other states and communities? What are the lessons learned?

Coming together can speak volumes. There is power when urban and greater Minnesota groups come together with the same mission. "We all wake up thinking about elevating student

achievement so every child can be successful," Scott Jones, a member of the backbone of Every Hand Joined said. "We had geopolitical and theoretical alignment."

was compelling testimony, critical relationships, policy expertise or parent organizing, all the organizations played a key role in the partnership," Muneer Karcher-Ramos, director of St Paul Promise Neighborhood, said.

Ramos, director of St Paul Promise Neighborhood, said.

Organize the grassroots and the grassstops. "When both are in play, that is a really positive force for change," said Charley Nelson, executive director of Every Hand Joined.

Learn to work with legislators. "Find powerful allies within the political process who are the kind of people who won't quit... people on both sides of the aisle who can be influential with their peers," Jones said.

Make sure legislators can see the outcome as a win-win situation. For greater Minnesota legislators there were two phrases that mattered: local control and data-driven.

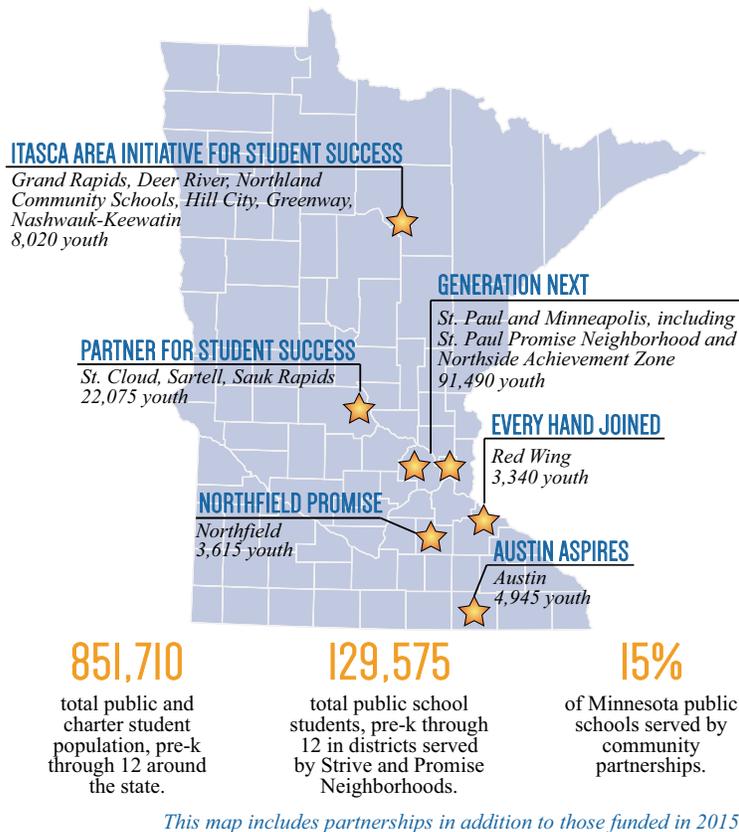
In addition, the track record of existing partnerships around the state using a common set of core principles made a difference.

See setbacks as opportunities. "We were super tenacious," Kate Mortenson, an advocate and supporter, explained. "Stay with it all the way to the end; don't take the off-ramp."

Don't get discouraged. Take an "all hands on deck" approach, said Karcher-Ramos. "When folks are willing to put in the work, good things happen."

Believe in what you are doing. "The odds are long, but the odds are long for the kids we're trying to help," Mortenson said.

MINNESOTA'S EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP MOVEMENT



Focusing on statewide education can speak to all audiences. Maureen Ramirez of Growth & Justice added, "People are really interested in education. Presenting a statewide picture really resonated with both urban and rural legislators."

Stress the things communities have in common across the state. "It is a reflection of what can happen when different communities come together," said Zach Pruitt, Executive Director of Northfield Promise. "How can communities address disparities? We have a powerful collective narrative."

Recognize that everyone brings assets to the table. "Whether it

ONLINE STORIES OF EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS

This month Growth & Justice is introducing a new section to our website highlighting education partnerships in Greater Minnesota focused on student success at every level. This statewide movement toward holistic and highly organized local education partnerships is picking up momentum in both the Twin Cities and Greater Minnesota. In the new section, we feature four programs around the state aimed at breaking down barriers to student achievement unique to each area. Growth & Justice intern Bridget Dooley traveled the state to see the work and impact of these groups first-hand, and shares with us these inspiring success stories.

These webpages serve as a general source of information and news about these partnerships in rural and Greater Minnesota and is designed to help communities begin thinking about how they might develop their own partnerships. These collaborations are a sophisticated response to highly complex problems of socio-economic disparity and widening gaps by income and race. Because of that complexity, we think understanding them is best accomplished through storytelling. Here we offer a series of four detailed narratives of what these partnerships are like, from the perspective of Bridget Dooley, a recent graduate of Sarah Lawrence University in New York, and its renowned writing program. Bridget served Growth & Justice as an education intern in the summer of 2015 and traveled hundreds of miles, crisscrossing Minnesota, and interviewing dozens of individuals to learn about the partnerships.

RED WING

As the name implies, Every Hand Joined brings together a broad coalition of educators, parents, childcare providers, business leaders, nonprofits, and local government in order to give young people ‘the support they need on a path to a meaningful career.’ To achieve this, they aspire to goals of kindergarten readiness, social & emotional support, academic success, post-high school learning, and career readiness. The partnership earned the 2014 Local Government Innovation Award in the school category from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota.

ITASCA

Home to 45,000, Itasca County spans 2,928 square miles—one of the most sparsely populated in the state. This can present challenges for the most vulnerable in the area. Learn how local residents built on a local tradition of collaboration, joining forces to fill in gaps and coordinate resources to ensure more Itasca families have access to childcare, basics like breakfast, clean clothes, and healthy relationships with a parent or caregiver, improved school curricula and out-of-school programming, a wider range of higher-level courses, and better connectedness with their communities. This data-driven whole-child approach, they believe, not only benefits children and families, but the whole region.

ST. CLOUD

Partner for Student Success works to improve student outcomes in the St. Cloud area, including Sauk Rapids, Sartell-St. Stephen, and Cold Spring. They take on “the ambitious task of igniting a community-wide effort to improve student outcomes.” Since the Partnership began in 2010, 75 people from the school districts, youth-serving organizations, nonprofits, and business leaders have joined in the work. Using a collective impact, Cradle-to-Career framework, the group hopes to align the work of local community members, institutions, and organizations.

NORTHFIELD

Northfield Promise works to help all Northfield area children thrive, from early childhood to career entry. Connecting and aligning resources, programs and community members to collaborate toward measurable results on 10 benchmarks throughout every child’s life accomplish this work. The Northfield area is rich with great community resources. By coordinating the work of these resources to aid children in reaching the benchmarks, Northfield Promise aims to achieve community-level change for children and youth.

Check out this new section today at www.growthandjustice.org/issues/education/community-partnerships.

WORKFORCE EQUITY FOR A COMPETITIVE ECONOMY

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in addressing the embarrassing racial disparities in our state's workforce. The disparity is compounded by the fact that employers are facing a labor shortage, especially for skilled jobs.

"I fault myself for not starting this [workforce diversity] initiative sooner," Dayton confided to several hundred attendees of the annual Minnesota Business Partnership dinner, with much of the senior leadership of the state's largest corporations and employers in attendance. "I guarantee it will be a top priority from now on."

The Legislature and other policy leaders also are warming to the challenge. As a result of a bipartisan-supported law in 2015, Minnesota finally joined about 30 other states in setting a specific goal for higher education attainment. By 2025, Minnesota is committed to having 70 percent of young adults with a postsecondary degree or workforce credential.

Over the last decade Growth & Justice has been the leading advocate in the state for setting that goal, and is part of an advisory team at the Minnesota

opportunities for a more diverse and inclusive workforce."

The Itasca Project report notes that by 2040, about 40 percent of the Twin Cities metropolitan area workforce will be people of color and our state and region will not stay strong economically with current racial disparities in employment and in education attainment.



Growth & Justice helped organize this team of partners and won state funding for education equity.

Office of Higher Education helping develop recommendations to reach the goal.

In an earlier op-ed we noted how strongly Minnesota business leaders are increasing support to close racial gaps in workforce readiness and employment. We cited a recent four-page policy brief by the Itasca Project, composed of some of the best and brightest leaders of our state's largest businesses, that begins with this clear statement: "Our regional competitiveness *depends* (emphasis added) on broadening

Watch for intensive focus on workforce equity from Growth & Justice in 2016. We will be co-sponsors of a major gathering in January, the College, Jobs & Opportunity Summit, with a special focus on youth of color. This gathering is a sequel to the North Star Summit we co-sponsored a year ago, and which gave impetus to important legislative progress on investing in career pathways and creating the new attainment goal. (Read more about this beginning on page 1).

We agree with Governor Dayton's description of the challenge in creating the new office: "This is a first and important step in addressing the troubling economic disparities facing people of color in Minnesota. We cannot afford to admire or ignore these problems any longer. It is time now to take action to improve the lives and economic futures of all Minnesotans."

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COLLEGE, JOBS & OPPORTUNITY SUMMIT

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This group came together as part of a statewide effort, led by state Senator Terri Bonoff, to better inform higher education leaders about critical data on Minnesota college access, completion, and equity. The 2014 North Star Summit was attended by over 250 participants, primarily from higher education administrators and policymakers—but limited representation from community-based organizations, communities of color and American Indian leadership—precisely the “users” of the system that can better inform the direction of higher education policies and directions in the state to close racial disparities. Due to the large racial disparities in college access, the organizations above made a commitment to continue a conversation about gathering innovative policy and practice solutions to the challenge of

Minnesota’s higher education disparities by *engaging* with families and students.

Additional partners for the planned College, Jobs & Opportunity Summit include the Citizens League, the Minnesota Education Equity Partnership, the Minnesota State College Student Association, the Center for School Change, and Everybody In. These partners reach a wide spectrum of K-12 students, higher education students, policymakers,

workforce development centers, and employers from across Minnesota.

We seek to convene a truly momentous and galvanizing summit of diverse new voices calling for the dream of workforce equity in Minnesota, who can help us accelerate our progress toward postsecondary completion for low-income families and students of color, and dramatically reduced workforce disparities and economic inequality in our state.

SAVE THE DATE!

Mark your calendars for our College, Jobs & Opportunity Summit **January 23**. Watch growthandjustice.org for details.

MINNESOTANS WITH DISABILITIES MUST BE PART OF WORKFORCE EQUITY MOVEMENT

On September 30, 2014, the White House issued a Presidential proclamation that designated October as “Disability Employment Awareness Month.” This year, we celebrate both the second annual observation of that month and the 25th anniversary of the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA was landmark civil rights legislation for Americans with disabilities, ensuring basic legal protections in employment and establishing legal requirements for accessibility in the built environment.

However, a quarter century after the passage of the bill, the landscape does not look as we hoped it might. According to a recent report by RespectAbility, a disability advocacy organization, the national unemployment rate for Americans with disabilities is 70 percent. Shockingly, this actually represents a 20 percent increase in the unemployment rate of Americans with disabilities since the passage of the ADA. To our credit, the report ranks Minnesota as the 5th best state in the nation for addressing unemployment in the disability community.

That ranking can be attributed to recent policy successes. In July of last year, President Obama signed the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA). The Act compelled states to develop plans for improving access to employment in integrated settings and Minnesota quickly responded. Governor Dayton issued Executive Order 14-14, setting the goal of raising the proportion of state workers who self-identify as disabled from 4% to 7%. Additionally, the state adopted the Employment First policy, which orders state

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MINNESOTANS WITH DISABILITIES

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agencies to develop individualized employment plans for Minnesotans with disabilities. The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development also provides both jobseekers and employers with resources for promoting inclusive hiring.

That said, local leadership on this issue is by no means limited to government action. The Minnesota Business Leadership Network has done great work to cultivate a culture of inclusion, driven by dialogue between businesses. As RespectAbility notes, 3M in particular has been a leader in employing Minnesotans with disabilities.

However, despite the accolades, there is a great deal of work to be done. While the state, as mentioned, ranks fifth in the nation for employing people with disabilities,

the report ranks Minnesota tenth for limiting the disparity between workers with and without disabilities. The employment rate for Minnesotans with disabilities is 46%, compared to 83% for those without disabilities.

In a sense, this is a familiar phenomenon song for Minnesota. While we have received recognition in recent years for holding down the overall unemployment rate, aggregate data belie the stark disparities that persist. In order to achieve true prosperity, Minnesota's public and private sectors need to persist in tackling unemployment among marginalized groups.

George Shardlow serves as Economic Development Intern for Growth & Justice. Learn more about George and our new Board members on page 3.