

The SCCF's 20th Anniversary Series

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Investing in Our Future

The youth of Starke County will one day be the adults of the community. They will be working, contributing to the economy, and raising families of their own. That's why we at the Starke County Community Foundation (SCCF) find it so important to support the education of Starke County youth. We do this by giving scholarships for both college and preschool, and by granting dollars to projects that focus on educating youth.

One organization that we support is the Starke County Youth Club (SCYC). This organization encourages a lifelong love of learning, through after-school programs, summer programs, and a recreational basketball program. They support children and families by providing a safe, enriching environment with positive role models. They meet the needs of today's working families by helping with homework and giving children tools to succeed!

The SCYC has received over \$28,000 from the SCCF for their program costs, including a \$5,000 Sustainability Grant. In 2014, the SCYC was chosen to receive this grant to be endowed with the SCCF. The SCYC's supporters can add to this endowment in order to help ensure that the SCYC will be around to serve the community's youth forever!

In order to promote the next generation's success, we believe that it's important to support their education. The SCCF has 36 scholarship funds that are awarded to Starke County graduating seniors in order help them pursue a college degree. In total, the SCCF has given \$2,887,305 in scholarships, including the Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship.

While it is so important to support students in their high school years, did you know that 85% of a child's brain development happens by the age of 5? Yet less than 10% of dollars are invested in the education of children during this crucial period.

In 2013, the SCCF decided to allocate funds toward a need that we believe is very important to the success of the community. The Community Foundation researched how we could make the greatest impact on Starke County. Finally, we determined that in order to do the most good for the community, we needed to support our youth in their preschool years.

Research shows that the benefits of attending preschool continue well into the child's adult years. Not only are children who attend preschool more likely to succeed in grade school, graduate high school, and obtain a college degree, but they are also less likely to be incarcerated or to need financial government assistance. As a result, rigorous studies have shown that for every dollar invested in early childhood education programs for low-income children, between \$4 and \$9 is returned to the community.



Students in the Starke County Youth Club Program

The SCCF decided to establish the Starke County Preschool Scholarship Program in order to serve the high number of Starke County 4 and 5-year-olds who do not attend preschool due to lack of financial resources. Since 2013, the SCCF has awarded \$47,864 and provided 78 scholarships for Starke County children to attend preschool.

Students who didn't attend preschool have another chance for kindergarten readiness through the Kindergarten Countdown programs in Knox and North Judson. The SCCF has supported these programs through more than \$25,000 in grants from the Starke United Fund.

Through these programs, students receive three weeks of kindergarten preparation during the summer before school starts. Through interactive activities, students learn nursery rhymes, numbers, and letters, focusing especially on identifying the letters in their names. They also develop their motor skills by playing visual and physical games. Additionally, the program helps students to understand how to follow school rules and routines.

During Kindergarten Countdown, students receive lunch, and they are also given a book each day to keep and read at home. The program supports familial involvement in students' education, and it helps to ease the children's transition into kindergarten.

The SCCF believes that the dollars given to support today's youth will continue to impact the entire community in the future. By promoting stronger brain development, higher educational attainment, and better qualification for labor force demands, we are helping to build a strong foundation for the future of our community.