



*Project*  *FINE*

# 2015 Annual Report

*Celebrating 25 Years - 1990-2015*



### ***About Project FINE:***

Project FINE is a nonprofit organization based in Winona, MN focused on integrating newcomers into our local community.

To achieve our mission, we provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services and education.

We also connect newcomers with existing services in our community.

Our work is accomplished by a small staff, committed volunteers, dedicated board members and extraordinary partners.

We are extremely proud to be celebrating our 25th anniversary this year and look forward to many more years of collaboration with the community to create an environment that is inclusive and welcoming to all.

### ***Our Mission:***

To strengthen and enrich our community by facilitating the integration of people who are ethnically diverse.

### ***Our Vision:***

To create a respectful and sensitive community.



### ***Our Guiding Values:***

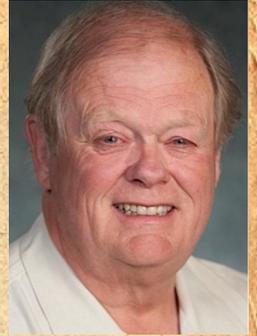
- Diversity
- Respect
- Culture
- Family
- Partnership

### ***Geographic Area Served:***

We are proud to serve Winona County and the surrounding region.

# Welcome

I am amazed at the power of story and how we can build community through sharing our experiences. Everyone has a story about why they are where they are, and it is often difficult for newcomers to share as they must recount the struggles and pain they had to overcome in their journey to America. This year, we shared several of these stories through our Hearing the Voices project. In addition to a booklet of stories, we partnered with the Winona Daily News to include several in the paper. Having them in the newspaper was a great benefit for the community, as it helps us all realize what people go through to come here. Our Hearing the Voices project and partnership also earned Project FINE the Winona Area Chamber of Commerce Award for Outstanding Leadership in Community Citizenship, and we are very proud of that honor.



As a board member, one of the things I enjoy most is meeting and working with so many different people. Our board represents a cross-section of the community and it is great to hear all of the various opinions and experiences. The most important thing for us is that we are all passionate about helping people pursue the American dream and contribute to the community. I am also pleased to share that the majority of our programming is funded by earned income and grants from foundations. I appreciate that we have the support of many business who have thrived in our free enterprise system. These businesses demonstrate a strong desire to do good by helping others learn to help themselves and become self-sufficient.

Tom Severson, 2015 Board President

Dear Friends,

As I look back on 2015, I am so proud of Project FINE and our accomplishments. With all of the crises and events happening across the globe, we are especially thankful to live in such a welcoming country and community. It reminds us of the importance of our work and value of our success. The stories of this success are evident in this report – we served more people than ever before, added new programming to meet the needs, and expanded our relationships within the private sector. We are so grateful to all of you who partner with us to fulfill our mission and support refugees and immigrants as they build a new life.



We also reached a great milestone this year, as Project FINE celebrated our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. What began as a grant program to serve refugee youth has grown into an organization with a wide variety of programs and services for youth and adults. Over the past quarter-century, we have had tough times and good times, but we are still here and are committed now more than ever to help our community. In preparing this report, we looked back over old pictures and newsletters and were truly inspired by the many, many people whose compassion and generosity has made Project FINE what it is today. In the end, Project FINE is about people, and we are inspired every day to improve and grow and do our part to help keep this a welcoming and wonderful place to live.

Fatima Said, Executive Director

# *Navigating Community Systems*

Programs in the Navigating Community Systems category provide educational resources to refugees and immigrants to ease their adjustment to the United States and begin the journey to self-sufficiency.

## *Language Services*

### *Giving a Voice*

Project FINE's Language Services program works with business and service providers to facilitate communication with their non-English speaking clients and customers. Our interpreter roster consists of 50 interpreters proficient in 24 languages. In 2015, Project FINE provided **3,340** hours of interpreting and translating services in over 60 different locations across our region. All of our interpreters receive training in ethics and best practices and ten are currently registered with the Minnesota Department of Health's Spoken Language Healthcare Interpreter Roster.

## *Advocacy & Information Referrals*

### *Making Connections*

Adjusting to life in the United States can be difficult, as newcomer families learn about the structure and systems in their new community. To assist with this transition, Project FINE provides information and connects refugees and immigrants with existing services in our community. These Advocacy & Information referrals are highly beneficial, as working with service providers we are able to ensure that the basic needs of newcomer families are met. During 2015, Project FINE provided **7,347** hours of advocacy and information referrals to more than 1,900 newcomers in our region.



## *Safe and Healthy Families*

The goal of the Safe and Healthy Families program is to help refugees and immigrants improve their family relationships, ensure household safety and prepare for disasters. Program activities include informational sessions on parenting, spousal relationships, disaster preparedness and household safety. Sessions began in the fall of 2015, with **33** individuals participating. Feedback from participants and partnering agencies has been very positive and activities will continue through mid-2016.

The Safe & Healthy Families program is funded by the United Way of the Greater Winona Area.

### *Building Strong Families*



# Learning Together

The Learning Together program brings together families and local early childhood professionals to promote early education and parental involvement. Activities include educational sessions, parent-child activities and in-home parent mentoring. In 2015, 57 parents and 51 children birth to age five participated in program activities. 112 parent mentoring sessions were provided and 100% of parents indicated that the program helped them understand the value of early learning.

The Learning Together program is funded through grants from Mardag Foundation, the Sheltering Arms Foundation and the Winona Early Childhood Initiative.

# Investing in Education



# Health and Wellness Initiative

## Developing a Healthy Community

This initiative provides health-related education and resources to refugees and immigrants and increase access to health resources and providers in the community. During 2015, the program focused on the importance of physical activity and nutrition. Program activities included educational presentations, and a variety of exercise and outdoor activities. All activities were provided in collaboration with local partners, including Winona State University, the Winona Senior Friendship Center, University of MN Extension and Winona Health. During 2015, 69 individuals participated in the Health and Wellness Initiative and began the path to a healthier life.

The Health and Wellness Initiative is funded through grant support from the Winona Community Foundation, Mayo Clinic Community Relations program and the Winona County Statewide Health Improvement Program.



# *Building Communities*

Programs in the Building Communities category bring together diverse groups of refugees, immigrants and established residents to promote cultural sharing and build understanding,

## *Answering the Voices*

The Answering the Voices program develops grassroots leaders from diverse populations to address community challenges or issues and work with others to develop innovative solutions. In 2015, program activities focused on empowering participants to practice their leadership skills. The group planned and facilitated four community dialogues based on issues or challenges they identified. Dialogue topics included law enforcement, immigration, education, and community services. Participants invited community leaders in these areas to ask questions and learn how they can partner to build a better community.

The conversations were highly successful, with over 300 people participating. Following the dialogues, several action steps were pursued, including making information available in multiple languages, working to adjust school bus routes, and composing letters to elected officials in support of legislation. As a result, participants began to embrace their role as leaders by encouraging others to get involved and volunteering their time to various community projects.

The Answering the Voices program is funded through a grant from the Bush Foundation.

## *Building Diverse Leaders*



## *Hearing the Voices*



a reception on April 23 at the Minnesota Marine Art Museum. 85 people attended the event, which included a panel discussion by project participants and volunteers and a reading of one of the stories.

Hearing the Voices is funded through grants from the Southeastern MN Arts Council and Winona Fine Arts Commission.

## *Sharing Our Stories*

The Hearing the Voices project encouraged refugees and immigrants to document and share their personal stories to promote understanding and build community. The project began with a series of workshops on the importance of story. Following the workshops, students from Winona State University worked with interpreters to visit newcomers in their homes and collect their stories. Fifteen stories were documented and compiled into a booklet. Many of the stories were also shared with the community through a featured series in the Winona Daily News. The project culminated with

# Exploring Hmong Art & Culture

The Exploring Hmong Art & Culture project empowers local Hmong artists to share their skills and bring awareness of their culture and traditional arts to the community. Project activities include three class series, each focused on a specific area: Hmong Culture, Paaj Ntaub or Hmong Embroidery and the Story Cloth. Classes are taught by local artists and provide participants with information on the art form and hands-on experience creating their own art works. Through a collaboration with the Winona Area Public Schools Community Education, class offerings are published in their catalogs to reach a wider audience. In 2015, **30** individuals registered for the Hmong Art & Culture and Paaj Ntaub classes and participant feedback has been excellent. Project activities will continue in 2015 with classes on the Story Cloth and a public capstone event in April.

The Cultural Arts & Ancestry project was funded through a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board.

## Exploring Traditions



This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Southeastern Minnesota Arts Council thanks to a legislative appropriation from the Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund.

## .COM Program



## Creative Online Marketing

The goal of the .COM program is to provide information and resources for diverse business owners and entrepreneurs interested in growing their business online. Project activities included educational sessions focused on online marketing and building a web presence, as well as individual assistance with developing websites and social media pages. **40** local businesses and entrepreneurs participated in the program and **17** developed an online marketing plan. **10** businesses also created a website or Facebook page, reaching a new audience.

This project was funded through grants from the Southeastern Minnesota Initiative Foundation and the Blandin Foundation.

## Diversity Training

Diversity training is provided on a variety of topics to local businesses, organizations, service providers and educational institutions. Training sessions are tailored to meet the needs of each client and often focus on specific cultural information, barriers to service and strategies to engage diverse populations.

During 2015, over **500** individuals in the Winona area participated in Project FINE's Diversity Training.

## Increasing Understanding

# Empowering Youth

Programs in the Empowering Youth category support youth from refugee and immigrant families as they pursue education and seek to find a balance between traditional and American cultures.

## Girls Reaching Above and Beyond

The Girls Reaching Above and Beyond (GRAB) program is designed to help girls age 10-18 discover their identity and strengths and create a roadmap to pursue their dreams. During 2015, 42 girls participated in program activities, which focus on career planning, leadership development and exploration of social and gender issues. Girls also volunteered in the community and attended a summer mini-camp focused on growing their personal leadership skills.

The GRAB program is funded by the Women's Foundation of Minnesota.

## Empowering Young Women



Through GRAB, I learned that we get to know people better when we work together and that when we do work together, we all do better.

-Jenny, 16

## Diversity Youth Quest

## Promoting a Healthy Tomorrow

The Diversity Youth Quest program is designed to improve the mental health and ease the social adjustment of youth from refugee and immigrant families. In 2015, 43 youth participated in program activities, including educational sessions, volunteer opportunities and teambuilding activities.

# College Education Connection

## Preparing for the Future

The College Education Connection program provides academic support, motivation and access to resources for youth from immigrant and refugee families who are pursuing higher education. The program serves students from the Winona, St. Charles and Lewiston-Altura school districts.

In 2015, Project FINE awarded scholarships to four graduating seniors to support their post-secondary education. Since the scholarship program began in 2009, Project FINE has distributed **24** scholarships to diverse students from across Winona County.

This scholarship meant a great deal to me and it was a motivation for me to pursue higher education. I graduated from Winona State University in 2015 with a bachelor's degree in marketing and am currently working in my field. Thank you for believing in me.

-Tou, College Education Connection Scholarship recipient



# Colorful Growers

## Growing Young Entrepreneurs

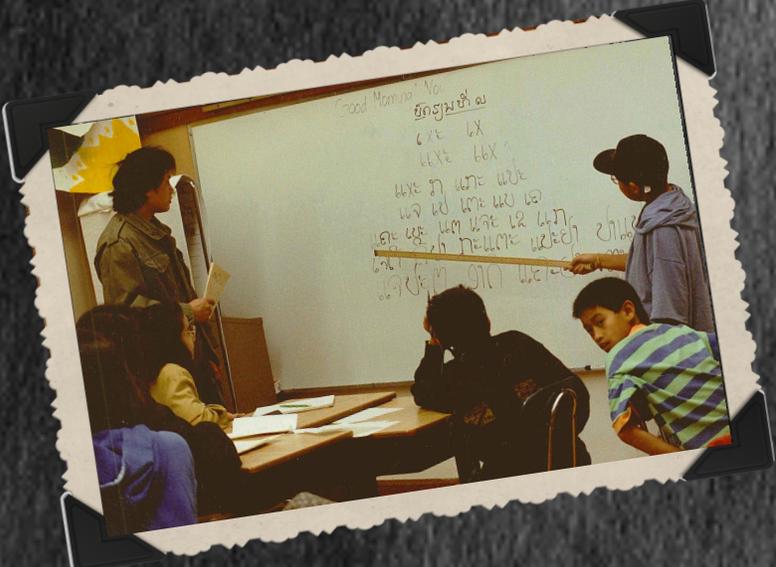
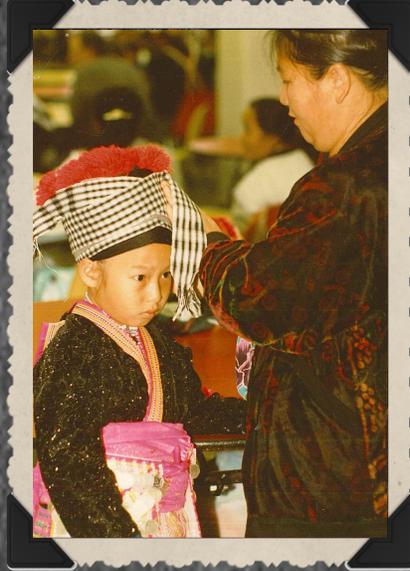
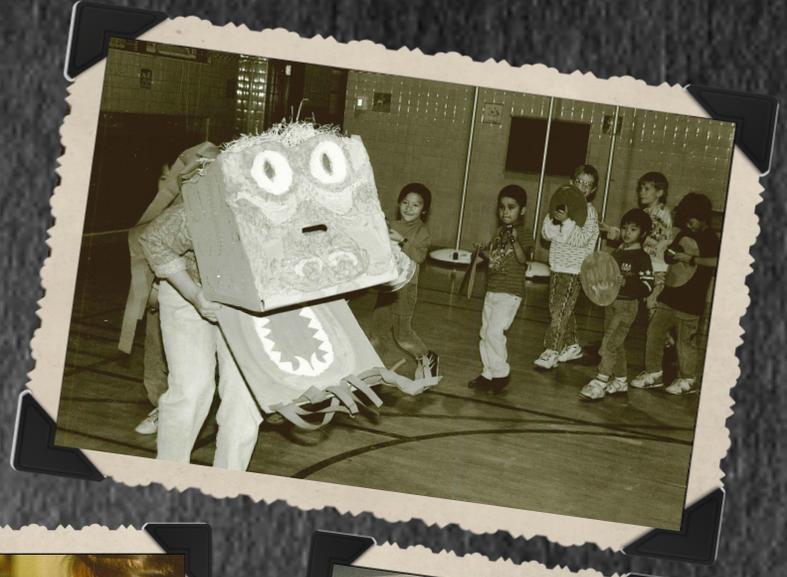
Colorful Growers provides youth ages 10-18 with a unique agricultural and entrepreneurial experience. Through the program, youth participate in agricultural training, plan and plant their own garden plot and sell their produce at the St. Charles Farmer's Market. During 2015, **15** youth and **10** parents participated in program activities.

Working together towards a common goal was a bonding experience for families and many parents commented that their relationship with their child improved as a result of this project. For youth participants, the seeds of confidence, accomplishment and entrepreneurship planted today will benefit youth and our community for many years to come.



Program materials and tilling for the Colorful Growers garden plot was funded through a mini-grant from the Winona County Statewide Health Improvement Program.

# Project FINE



# Through the Years



# Project FINE



# Through the Years



# Community Involvement

## Immigration Outreach and Education

During 2015, Project FINE and the Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota (ILCM) collaborated on several educational events in our region. In March, over 75 community members attended an informational session on Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. In September, ILCM visited Winona to speak with service providers and the community about immigration assistance for victims of domestic violence and crime.

## Small Business Seminar

In April, Project FINE hosted a small business seminar in Winona in collaboration with Winona County and the Southern MN Initiative Foundation. Thirty-two local entrepreneurs participated in the event, which included information from the Winona State University Marketing Department, Winona County Economic Development Authority, Winona Farmer's Market and St. Charles Farmer's Market.

## Business Outreach

Throughout the year, Project FINE collaborated with several businesses to assist with recruiting diverse employees. As a result of these partnerships, over 50 people were hired by local companies. Project FINE also participated in the SE MN Together project, which aims to collaborate with communities across our region to address workforce shortages. Project FINE staff served on the planning committee and conducted outreach to engage diverse individuals.

## Winona Area Chamber of Commerce Award

On May 19, Project FINE received the Outstanding Leadership in Community Citizenship award from the Winona Area Chamber of Commerce for our Hearing the Voices project. Each year, this award is given to an initiative that has exemplifies leadership in community citizenship.



## Upper Midwest Civic Engagement Summit

On July 9, Fatima gave the keynote speech for the Upper Midwest Civic Engagement Summit, which is an annual collaboration between Iowa Campus Compact, Minnesota Campus Compact and Wisconsin Campus Compact. The summit provides professional development for leaders in higher education, engagement and service-learning efforts. Fatima shared her story and strategies to engage diverse populations.

## Minnesota Council of Nonprofits Panel Presentation

In July, Fatima served on the panel for the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits event *The Nonprofit Role in Building Community Inclusion and Engagement: A Community Forum*. This presentation focused on ways to advance inclusion and engagement to strengthen the community and support nonprofit mission fulfillment.



## We are Winona: Cultures of Our County

On August 10, the Winona County History Center opened an exhibit titled *We Are Winona: the Cultures of our County*. This exhibit highlights the various cultures that make up the community of Winona County both past and present through stories, images and artifacts.

# Community Involvement

## Dancing With Winona Stars

On August 15, the Simply FINE dancers brought a little country to the Dancing With Winona Stars event, performing a line dance. Project FINE Board Members Dorothy Duran, Nicole Messenger, Paul Mundt, Mark Roubinek and Brian Voerding did a fantastic job and raised over \$4,800 for the College Education Connection program and scholarships.



## Gladiolus Days Parade

On August 30, Project FINE participated in the Gladiolus Days Parade in St. Charles. Staff and program participants walked in the parade with staff to raise awareness of the organization.



## Citizenship Day

Project FINE's Third Second Annual Citizenship Day celebration was held on September 17, honoring those who have chosen to become naturalized citizens. Over 50 people attended the event, including several new citizens and elected officials. In 2015, seven individuals who received support and education through Project FINE took their oath of citizenship.



## AmeriCorps VISTA 50th Anniversary Minnesota Spotlight

On October 30, Fatima served on a panel for the VISTA program's 50th Anniversary Celebration hosted by the Corporation for National and Community Service in Minneapolis. The panel focused on poverty and VISTA's mission to help alleviate poverty through community service. Project FINE hosted several VISTA volunteers and is proud to be a part of this wonderful program.

## Border to Border Broadband Conference

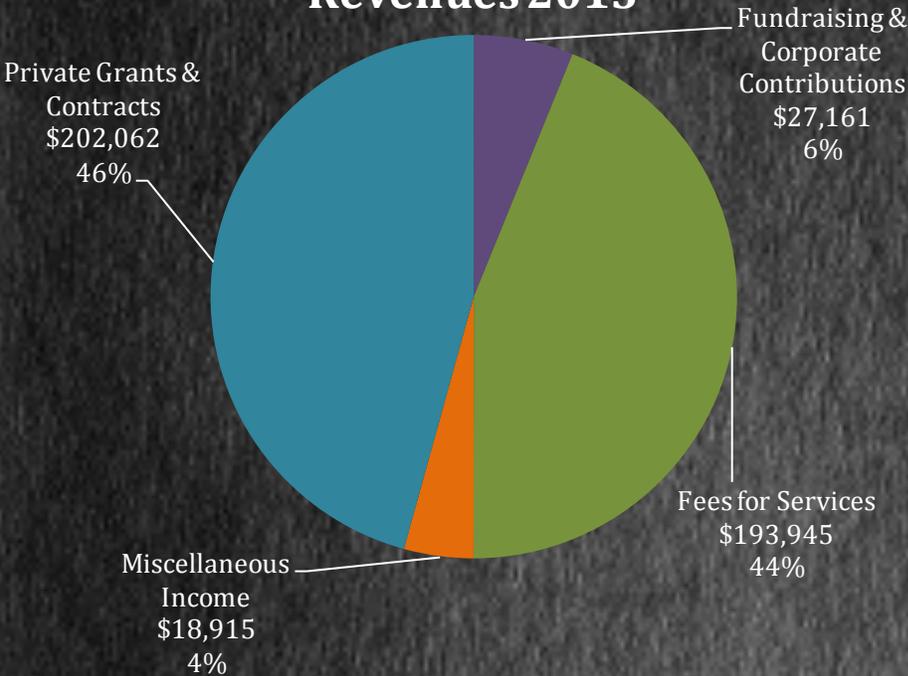
On November 18, Fatima presented at the Blandin Foundation's Border to Border Broadband: Better Together in Minneapolis. She shared best practices from Project FINE's technology education programs and highlighted the importance of digital literacy for newcomers.

## Project FINE Staff serve on several local Boards and Committees, including:

- ◆ Cotter School Board of Directors
- ◆ MN State College-Southeast Technical Foundation Board
- ◆ Ready Set School Board of Directors
- ◆ FEAST Local Foods Group
- ◆ St. Charles Early Childhood Initiative
- ◆ St. Charles Farmer's Market Board of Directors
- ◆ U of MN Extension Community Advisory Committee
- ◆ Winona Area Public Schools Birth - Grade 3 Committee
- ◆ Winona Area Public Schools Diversity Advisory Committee
- ◆ Winona County Community Services Advisory Committee
- ◆ Winona County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council
- ◆ Winona Human Rights Commission

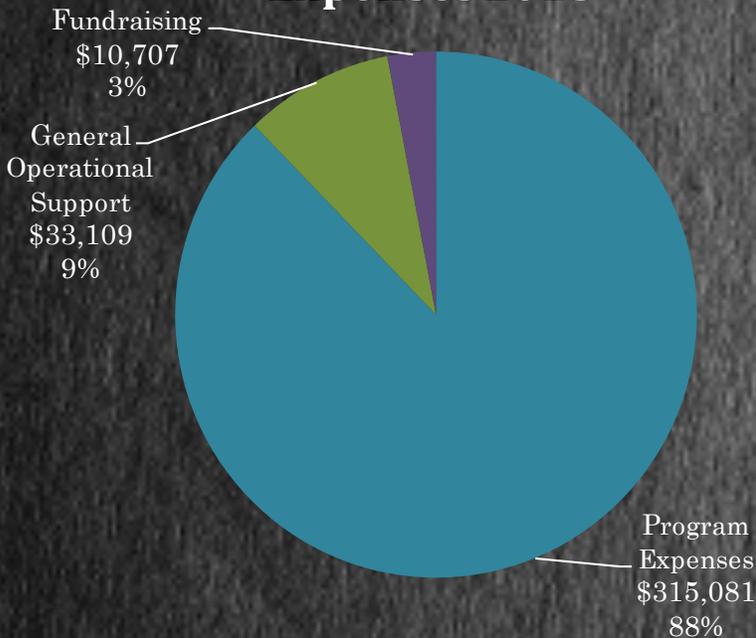
# 2015 Financial Summary

## Revenues 2015



Total Revenues 2015	\$442,083
Total Expenses 2015	\$358,897
Board Designated Funds for Grant Cash Match	\$7,720
Board Designated Funds for Continuation of Navigating Community Systems Programs	\$25,000
Board Designated Funds for Continuation of Building Communities Programs	\$25,000
Board Designated Funds for Continuation of Empowering Youth Programs	\$25,000

## Expenses 2015



It has been my pleasure as Mayor to get to know firsthand the fine work done by Project FINE in our community. The programs they offer are vital and help make our community a much better, more diverse and richer place to live and work.

-Mark Peterson, Winona Mayor

# Community Partnerships

We would like to thank the many community businesses and organizations who partner with us to provide programs and services to newcomers and established residents throughout our region. We are grateful for your support.

- Behrens Manufacturing
- Blandin Foundation
- Blue Cross and Blue Shield of MN
- Bush Foundation
- Charities Review Council
- City of Saint Charles
- City of Winona
- Corporation for National & Community Service
- Cotter Schools
- Diocese of Winona
- Dr. Chris Carroll - Pediatric Dental
- Family and Children's Center
- Gundersen Lutheran
- HBC
- Hiawatha Valley Mental Health
- Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota
- International Quality Home Care
- Knitcraft-St. Croix Foundation
- Lewiston School District # 857
- Live Well Winona
- Mardag Foundation
- Mayo Clinic
- Merchants Bank
- Midwest Dental Clinic
- Minnesota Council of Nonprofits
- Minnesota Department of Corrections
- Minnesota Marine Art Museum
- Minnesota State Bar Foundation
- Minnesota State Arts Board
- MN State College Southeast Technical
- MN State Colleges and Universities
- MN Third Judicial District
- Olmsted Medical Center
- Options Plus Home Care
- Rollingstone Cenex
- St. Charles Public Schools
- Saint Mary's University of Minnesota
- Sauer Memorial Home
- SEMCAC
- Severson Oil Company
- Sheltering Arms Foundation
- Southern MN Initiative Foundation
- Southern MN Regional Legal Services
- Southeast MN Rural Education & Resource Center
- Southeastern MN Arts Council
- UCare of Minnesota
- United Way
- University of Minnesota Extension
- Wabasha County
- Welcoming America
- WinCraft
- Winona Area Public Schools
- Winona Area Chamber of Commerce
- Winona Community Foundation
- Winona County
- Winona County Historical Society
- Winona County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council
- Winona Early Childhood Initiative
- Winona Fine Arts Commission
- Winona Health
- Winona Hims
- Winona Housing & Redevelopment Authority
- Winona Human Rights Commission
- Winona National Bank
- Winona State University
- Winona Volunteer Services
- Winona Workforce Center
- Women's Foundation of Minnesota
- Women's Resource Center

## 2015 Partners Award

Each year, Project FINE designates one or more partners for special recognition through the Partners Award. This year, we are proud to recognize the following exceptional partner:

### Winona Daily News

Winona Daily News has been an exceptional partner to Project FINE over the past twenty-five years. During 2014-2015, they were instrumental to the success of our

Hearing the Voices project. They spent countless hours interviewing refugees and immigrants in our community and documenting their life experiences. They also printed several of the stories in the newspaper, which was a powerful and a wonderful tool to build inclusion. Project FINE would like to thank the Winona Daily News for their commitment to providing news and stories that reflect our community and build understanding.

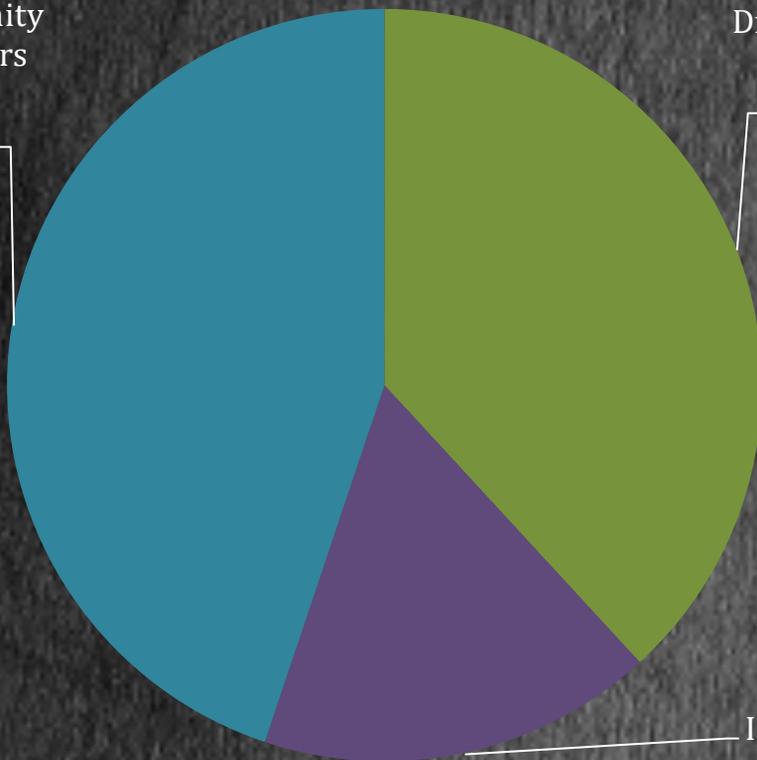


# Volunteer Information

Volunteers are an important part of Project FINE, lending their time and talents to help create a more welcoming and sensitive community. We would like to thank all of the dedicated individuals who contributed thousands of hours in 2015 in support of Project FINE's programs and events.

## Project FINE Volunteer Hours 2015 (5,315 Total Hours)

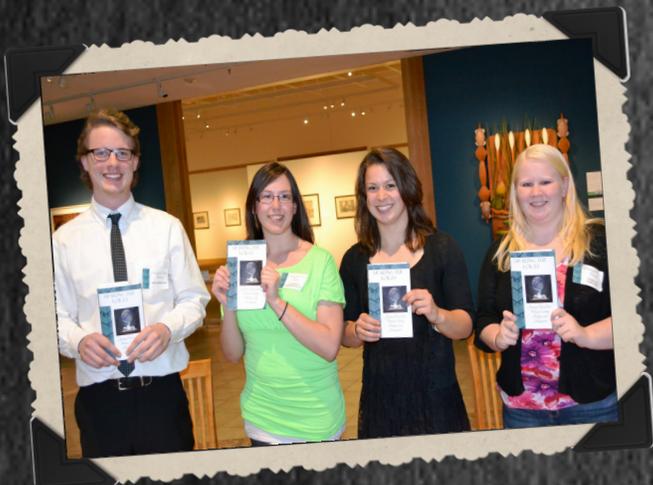
Students and  
Community  
Members  
2,384  
45%



Board of  
Directors  
2,028  
38%

2015 Project FINE Interns:  
Leanne Cleveland  
Ashley Graff  
Ben Mompier  
Alexis Revolinski  
Emily Stolle

Interns  
903  
17%



# Board Members & Staff

Project FINE's board members are a tremendous asset to the organization, sharing their time and talents to promote and further our mission. Their hard work and dedication is a great benefit to Project FINE and the entire community. We would also like to thank the many contracted interpreters whose time and talent contribute to the success of our Language Services program.



Back Row: Mark Roubinek, Bill Spitzer, Brian Voerding, Bernhard Brenner, Dan Matejka, Tom Severson

Front Row: Paul Mundt, Hamid Akbari, Nicole Messenger, Dorothy Duran, Joel Von Haden, Fatima Said, Dale Hinckley

Not Pictured: Dave Dicke

## 2015 Project FINE Board of Directors

Tom Severson, President  
Severson Oil

Paul Mundt, Vice President  
Southern MN Regional  
Legal Services

Bernhard Brenner, Treasurer  
Knitcraft Corporation

Nicole Messenger, Secretary  
Merchants Bank

Hamid Akbari  
Winona State University

Dave Dicke  
Hiawatha Broadband  
Communications

Dr. Dorothy Duran  
Minnesota State College—  
Southeast Technical

Dale Hinckley  
Hinckley Holsteins

Dan Matejka  
City of Goodview

Mark Roubinek  
St. Charles Public Schools

Bill Spitzer  
City of St. Charles

Brian Voerding  
Winona Daily News

Joel Von Haden  
Winona Heating and Ventilating

## Project FINE Staff

Fatima Said, Executive Director  
Chong Sher Vang, Program Development Director  
Katie van Eijl, Program Manager  
German Victoria, Program Coordinator  
Maria Rodriguez-Ramirez,  
Hispanic/Latino Community Liaison  
Dolly Yang, Hmong Community Liaison



Back Row: Fatima Said, German Victoria, Katie van Eijl  
Front Row: Chong Sher Vang, Dolly Yang, Maria Rodriguez-Ramirez

# *Project* **FINE**

*Focus on Integrating Newcomers through Education*



**[www.projectfine.org](http://www.projectfine.org)**

## **Winona Office**

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## **St. Charles Office**

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**Voice: 507-932-3020 Fax: 507-932-5301**