Young students are getting the reading support they need at an earlier age so that they can flourish as kids, and later in the life, thanks to support from The Amy Helpenstell Foundation Fund. Spring Forward Learning Center, a school-based after school program, pairs educators with at-risk students. Today, the nonprofit serves 400 students at five elementary and two junior high schools in the Rock Island–Milan School District.

Spring Forward is in its final year of a three-year, $45,000 grant from the Foundation Fund. The program was started in 2007 by Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church as a safe place for kids to congregate after school. Its focus and programming has shifted since then in response to growing community needs, Executive Director Dan McNeil said.

“This grant has been critical for us because it supports our sustainability,” McNeil said. “It allows us to focus on programming and we don’t have to spend as much time scratching and clawing for additional funding sources each year. We are incredibly grateful to The Amy Helpenstell Foundation Fund for being a true partner with us in our efforts.”

All of Spring Forward’s programs are based at the schools, enriching the lives of young students who may be falling behind in their reading. The program, McNeil said, focuses on the literacy of kindergarten through third graders. The students participate in small group tutoring, and are offered a meal.

“This program offers kids a safe, nurturing environment after school,” he said.

The program is different from others because of its intense focus on reading. The children who are eligible to participate are identified by teachers or parents. Spring Forward employs more than 25 part-time employees. More and more families in the community have started taking advantage of the program.

“It’s absolutely a need in this community,” he said. “Our goal is to have all children reading at a third grade level—that’s extremely important to us.”

The organization’s needs align perfectly with the hopes, goals and guidelines established by the Foundation Fund’s Advisory Committee in several ways, including meeting community needs, the funds being used to the best advantage to serve people most in need, and achieving overall success because of the grant. Since the start of the grant, the program has seen greater need and has been able to respond to that need.

“The Amy Helpenstell Foundation Fund has been a significant contributor in our organization’s growth. We’ve seen the kids we serve grow in remarkable, meaningful ways. And that’s because of the legacy Amy left behind.”

—Dan McNeil, Executive Director
Spring Forward Learning Center

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Spring Forward Learning Center
### Spring 2015 Grantees

- YWCA of the Quad Cities, for the Childcare Center: $20,000
- YouthBuild Quad Cities, for the job training and pre-apprenticeship program: $10,000
- Youth Services Bureau of Rock Island County, for the Family Therapy Program: $20,000
- WVIK Quad Cities NPR, for the Amy Helpenstell Public Broadcast Fellowship: $12,000
- Transitions Mental Health Services, for the Youth Engagement Project: $9,900
- Thomas Merton House, Inc., for daily readiness of the meal program at Café on Vine: $10,000
- Supplemental Emergency Assistance Program, for client emergency financial assistance: $10,000
- Martin Luther King Jr. Center, Inc., for the center’s Metropolitan Youth Program: $15,000
- Martin Luther King Jr. Center, Inc., for the center’s other youth programs: $20,000
- The Center for Youth & Family Solutions, for enhancement of crisis intervention services: $5,000
- Vera French Foundation, for expansion of the school-based services program: $20,000
- YWCA of the Quad Cities, for the place2b: $12,000

### Fall 2015 Grantees

- Christian Care, for domestic violence counseling and case management: $15,000
- Churches United of the Quad City Area, for Winnie’s Place Emergency Shelter: $15,000
- Family Resources, for Core Mission Campaign match: $10,000
- Habitat for Humanity Quad Cities, for a new home: $5,000
- Humility of Mary Housing, Inc., for transitional housing for single parent families experiencing homelessness: $18,000
- Humility of Mary Shelter, Inc., for shelter, housing and services for the homeless: $18,000
- Martin Luther King Jr. Center, Inc., for the center’s Metropolitan Youth Program: $15,000
- Martin Luther King Jr. Center, Inc., for the center’s other youth programs: $20,000
- Project Renewal, for the after-school program: $14,000
- Quad City Arts, for the Visiting Artist Series: $5,000
- Quad City Botanical Center, for self-guided tour technology: $5,000
- Rebuilding Together Quad Cities, for home repairs for those least able: $20,000
- River Bend Foodbank, for the Backpack Program: $15,000
- Rock Island County Extension and 4-H Education Foundation, for teen leadership: $3,000
- St. Joseph the Worker House Association, for transitional housing for homeless women and children: $10,000
- Supplemental Emergency Assistance Program, for client emergency financial assistance: $10,000
- Thomas Merton House, Inc., for daily readiness of the meal program at Café on Vine: $10,000
- Transitions Mental Health Services, for the Youth Engagement Project: $9,900
- WVIK Quad Cities NPR, for the Amy Helpenstell Public Broadcast Fellowship: $12,000
- Youth Services Bureau of Rock Island County, for the Family Therapy Program: $20,000
- YouthBuild Quad Cities, for the job training and pre-apprenticeship program: $10,000
- YWCA of the Quad Cities, for the Childcare Center: $20,000

### Our Mission

The Amy Helpenstell Foundation Fund improves the quality of life in the Quad Cities area by funding educational programs and by funding grants for health, community development, youth development and cultural activities.

### Advisory Committee

- Franz “Bud” Helpenstell
- Eric Helpenstell
- Bonnie Helpenstell
- Denise Ormsby
- Karen Evers
- Heidi Huiskamp Collins
- Stephanie Acri
- Mark Schwiebert
- Mark Evers

### Approach to Grantmaking

In 2015, the Foundation Fund refined our approach to grantmaking so that our impact in the community is as effective as it can be. So many of the grantmaking practices that have served us well for more than a decade continue to serve us today.

In 2016, we will continue to:
- Support our focus areas of arts and culture, community development, education, health, and youth development;
- Invite organizations to apply, so that we can develop long-standing relationships with nonprofits while also exploring new opportunities;
- Continue to encourage applications for core operating support for ongoing programs, and to provide renewable grants, so that organizations can plan ahead and leverage other funds.

We have identified qualities of our most inspiring grantees to guide future decisions, like programs:
- That meet identified community needs;
- That are effective in achieving their goals relative to the dollars used;
- Where our grants are an important part of the organization’s overall success.

Learn more about our approach online at www.amyhelpenstell.org >