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Minnesota Community Foundation Receives Bush Foundation Grant to Advance Healthy Infant and Toddler Development

Saint Paul, Minn. (Jan. 15, 2009) — Minnesota Community Foundation announced today that it received a \$1.5 million grant from the Bush Foundation to develop grants and systems to support early childhood development for infants and toddlers in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota.

Jane Fruehling Kretzmann joins the Minnesota Community Foundation to implement the program. Kretzmann is a former senior program officer at the Bush Foundation, where she was responsible for its early childhood development grantmaking. Kretzmann will work closely with colleagues at Minnesota Community Foundation and The Saint Paul Foundation, whose successful Words Work! early literacy program has helped close the achievement gap for 9,500 pre-school children through Head Start programs and is a statewide model in Minnesota for literacy development.

“This grant allows us to pay special attention to children in the most vulnerable circumstances,” said Carleen K. Rhodes, president of Minnesota Community Foundation and The Saint Paul Foundation. “Receiving this grant and bringing Jane on board enables us to complement the work we’re already doing in early childhood literacy, by providing the most fundamental building blocks of healthy social and emotional development.”

Research shows that the healthy development of very young children, beginning before birth, sets the stage for positive outcomes across their lifespan.

Minnesota Community Foundation’s infant and toddler initiative will establish a small grants program and provide opportunities for education, training, and organizing various stakeholders, including policy makers, public and private sector program administrators, community organizations and child care providers. The goal is to deepen and share knowledge about the uniqueness of infant toddler development, and to advocate for increased investments. It also will share best practices that can support sustainable system-wide changes, raise awareness for the needs of this population, and seek to improve coordination and integration among the many people and organizations that touch the lives of infants and toddlers.

“This grant establishes a platform that builds upon prior investments by the Bush Foundation and others for infants and toddlers,” said Kretzmann. “We know more today about early childhood development than we ever have before, and we often see a disconnect between what we know and what we do. This grant gives us an opportunity to create a bridge from research to practice and to build sustainable systems that support and strengthen the capacity of communities and families to care for infants and toddlers, beginning before birth.”

The Bush Foundation has a long legacy of supporting children under the age of three, particularly those in the most vulnerable settings, creating programs and supporting the family, friends and neighbors who provide the majority of their care. Minnesota Community Foundation shares that commitment and will continue the work started by the Bush Foundation.

In her 20 years at the Bush Foundation, Kretzmann's work included developing and managing three statewide child development programs to improve the quality of care for infants and toddlers. She has worked with culturally and linguistically diverse early childhood professionals, American Indian reservations and mainstream populations. She previously worked with refugee and immigrant populations at Minnesota Department of Human Services and Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota.

Grant guidelines for the Minnesota Community Foundation's new infant toddler initiative will be determined by March 2009 and the first grants, totaling \$400,000, will be allocated later in the year. Information will be available at www.mncommunityfoundation.org at that time.

About Minnesota Community Foundation

Minnesota Community Foundation is the statewide community foundation helping to create vibrant communities where all people can find hope and opportunity. As a nonprofit organization created by and for local residents, the Foundation helps individuals, organizations and communities fulfill their charitable giving goals and create positive change through philanthropy. From Argyle to Zumbrota, the Foundation provides charitable planning, grantmaking and investment services. Minnesota Community Foundation was established in 1949 and has become the fastest growing community foundation in the state – more than doubling its assets under management in less than five years. For more information, go to www.mncommunityfoundation.org.

The Bush Foundation

The Bush Foundation was established in 1953 by 3M executive Archibald Bush and his wife Edyth. The Foundation strives to be a catalyst to shape vibrant communities in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota by investing in courageous *and* effective leadership that significantly strengthens and improves the well-being of people in these three states.

Beginning in 2009, the Bush Foundation is pursuing its *Goals for a Decade*—in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota to develop courageous leaders and engage entire communities in solving problems, to support the self-determination of Native nations and to increase educational achievement. (For more information about *Goals for a Decade*, visit www.bushfoundation.org.)

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