

# 2024 CONTRIBUTION TO COMO PARK ZOO & CONSERVATORY TOTAL CONTRIBUTION | \$2,215,107

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COMO ZOO		\$686.038
Zacksoner Desitions and Care for the Animak		Ψ120,000 ΦΩ1,050
	s	
Como Harbor Seal Doors		\$30,000
Animal Care and Welfare Supplies		\$25,000
Utility Vehicle for Primate Zockeepers		\$20,000
Replacement of Trees on Zoo Grounds		\$20,000
Updates to Orangutan Outside Habitat		\$20.000
	and Patio	
Tapka and Equipment for Aquatia Species He	eld Behind the Scenes	φ20,000 Φ15,000
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Skylights in Orangutan Habitat		\$10,000
Water Leaters in Outside Verde of Old Pers		
Polar Bear Population Management Conferen	nce	\$1,038
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MARJORIE MCNEELY CONSERVATORY.	. 🥷 🧥	\$975,202
	า Master Plan Execution	
Danless Oushiel Danne Vants	I Masici Flati Execution	ψυυ4,7υθ
Replace Orchid Room vents		\$81,000
Tree Pruning in Inside and Outside Gardens.		\$70,000
Charlotte Partridge Ordway Japanese Garder	n Tree Pruning and Technical Training	\$56,500
Greenhouse Shade Replacement		\$40.000
Safety and Pesticide Application Equipment		\$23,000
Plants for Inside and Outside Cardons		
Plants for Inside and Outside Gardens		\$20,000
Play Days Fountain Repair		\$4,000
COMO CAMPUS		. \$250,925
Auditorium Sound System		\$56.325
Lactation Pod		\$20,000
Floor Scrubbers		\$15,000
Bathroom Inclusion Equipment		\$3,500
Environmental Testing of Zoological Building F	Basement	\$1.100
	/ /	
New Show Fups		\$ 1,000
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Education Positions and Annual Operations.		\$71,200
Ambaggadar Animal Dilat and Evaluit Dian		\$00,000 \$20,000
	ships	
School Bus Scholarship Fund		\$20,000
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interpretive 100is: Biotacts and Repairs		\$2,500
VOLUNTEER SERVICES		\$31,000



Como Friends supports free access to the 1.9 million visitors annually to Como Park Zoo & Conservatory. In 2024 63% of our visitors were from the Twin Cities metro area, 22% from Greater Minnesota, and 15% visited from out of state.

#### DEAR FRIENDS,

When Como Friends got its start 25 years ago, Como Park Zoo & Conservatory's education programs were housed in a mobile trailer—today, they take place in exceptional purpose-built classrooms that serve hundreds of school districts every year.

When Como Friends was founded, polar bears lived in a cramped concrete space—today, they're thriving in a naturalistic habitat with a splashy saltwater pool and state-of-the-art animal care resources.

When Como Friends formed, the historic Zoo and Conservatory were separate entities, supported by four different nonprofits and docent groups—today, they're united by a single entry point, a shared vision, and a nonprofit fundraising partner that's invested over \$52 million in donations from individuals, corporations, and foundations and has leveraged an additional \$50 million from the Minnesota State Legislature through its advocacy work.

Look in every direction on your next visit to Como Park Zoo & Conservatory and you'll see there's not a corner that hasn't been elevated and improved by the thoughtful stewardship of Como Friends. From the operant conditioning animal training that's made Como Zoo a national leader in humane animal care, to major capital improvements like The Ordway Gardens and Como Harbor, to innovative education offerings like Como's second grade field trip partnership with the St. Paul public schools, to the free admission that provides access for every visitor, many of Como's best loved resources were first made possible with the support of Como Friends, and the growing community of generous donors who have trusted us with their support.

For 25 years, that mission has been stewarded by Como Friends' long-tenured president, Jackie Sticha, who will retire this summer. As the organization prepares for this generational change in leadership, we will continue to be guided by the important lessons we've learned in forging one of the most successful public/private partnerships in the state of Minnesota.

Working in partnership with the community, we know the value of protecting the free admission that makes Como accessible to all. Working in collaboration with Como's dedicated zookeepers, horticulturists, educators, and staff, we've seen that extraordinary things are possible when we come together around a shared vision. And working closely with generous donors like you, we're confident that Como's wild and precious plants and animals will have the resources they need to thrive, while inspiring our visitors with the wonders of nature.



Andy Davis
Board Chair
COMO FRIENDS BOARD OF DIRECTORS



## COMO FRIENDS

As she prepares to retire, founding President Jackie Sticha looks back at Como Friends' long list of accomplishments

Como Friends was just an idea when Jackie Sticha first heard about the new fundraising organization forming in 1999 on behalf of one of the Twin Cities' most iconic institutions. "What drew me is that this was a brand new organization with some really big plans," she says. "What brought people together was a deep love for what Como meant to the community, the passion and knowledge of the Zoo and Conservatory staff, and our shared vision for what could make Como even better."

The long-tenured president of Como Friends, Sticha has managed a 25-year to-do list that has transformed Como Park Zoo & Conservatory for the 21st century. Since the organization's founding in 2000, Sticha has led annual fundraising strategy, advocacy initiatives, and three successful capital campaigns that have contributed \$52 million toward the historic Como Zoo and the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory, leveraging an additional \$50 million in state funds made possible through Como Friends' advocacy work. The infusion of new funding into Como's century-old campus has had a remarkable impact, creating new classroom space and education programs that serve thousands of visitors every year, unveiling cutting-edge habitats, and cultivating gorgeous new gardens, all while protecting the free admission that Como's community values.

"Unveiling the Visitor Center, Tropical Encounters, the new Fern Room and the Orchid House in 2005 was the real turning point, because it brought the historic Zoo and the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory together with a shared entrance and a shared mission," Sticha says. "It was also the first visual demonstration of what the future at Como would look like." Since then, Como Friends has led the charge on two additional capital campaigns, one for Como Harbor, and another to create Polar Bear Odyssey and The

Ordway Gardens. Como Friends also secured the major gift that renamed the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory, and a \$1 million endowment to create a permanent source of support for the Charlotte Partridge Ordway Japanese Garden.

During Sticha's tenure, Como Friends finished each fiscal year with an operating surplus and increased the annual contribution to Como Park Zoo & Conservatory. Como Friends' steady growth created a dependable source for Como's annual operations and ongoing improvements. When public funding for Gorilla Forest was threatened, Como Friends expanded its profile to include advocacy work, joining Como each legislative season to support the campus's role as both a community asset and an economic powerhouse that welcomes nearly two million visitors each year—the largest audience for any cultural institution in the state. Como Friends also successfully diversified its revenue streams with a mix of popular fundraising events like Bouquets, Sunset Affair, and Como After Hours; strong relationships with foundations and corporate funders; growing individual giving programs; and a successful gift shop operation, Garden Safari Gifts.

"Being at a job for 25 years is a long time, but I've never been bored because Como is so dynamic, with living animals and gardens that are always changing and evolving," says Sticha. "Between our staff, our board, and our donors, there are so many wonderful people connected to Como. It's been an honor working with them, and working together for something that is so meaningful to our community."



66 Como Friends' success, stability, and growth are due in large part to Jackie's leadership," says Andy Davis, chair of Como Friends' board of directors. "Over 25 years, Jackie's commitment to Como has been steadfast. She has built deep relationships in our community, helped articulate a clear vision for the future, and has strengthened virtually every facet of Como Park Zoo & Conservatory. If you look around the campus it's clear that Como Friends' impact over the last 25 years has been transformative. ??

-Andy Davis, Como Friends Board Chair

2000

is formed.

2002

One of Como Friends' The nonprofit that first major gifts gives the became Como Friends Conservatory a new name: the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory.

The historic Zoo and Conservatory unite through the new Visitor Center and Tropical Encounters, the immersive rainforest habitat.

2005

New classroom space allows Como's education programs to expand sixfold, making conservation and environmental stewardship the focus for field trips and family programs.

2008

Polar Bear Odyssev opens, marking the

turning point toward

habitats for animals.

more naturalistic outdoor

2010

When public bonding for Gorilla Forest is threatened. Como Friends steps up as an advocate for Como's economic impact and cultural importance.

2012

2013

Paid for entirely by contributions to Como Friends, the new Ordway Gardens wing highlights Como's outstanding Japanese horticultural resources.

2017

Como Friends launches Conservation Champions, sending Como's professional zookeepers and horticulturists out in the field, sharing their expertise with conservation organizations, and returning with new insights to share with Como visitors.

2020

During the pandemic pause, Como Friends' funding ensures stable operations for Como Park Zoo & Conservatory, as well as a new strategic plan for education focused on promoting empathy for animals and plants.

2022

The new \$21 million Como Harbor opens, reimagining the Sparky Show tradition for a whole new generation of young visitors.

2024

Como Friends reaches a major fundraising milestone, having secured more than \$50 million in private donations, while leveraging more than \$50 million in public funding to support Minnesota's most visited cultural destination.



Accessibility can't begin and end with Como's free admission. We also need to make sure that when folks get here, they can experience everything Como has to offer. Having signage in multiple languages, ADA-accessible doors that work throughout the zoo, and improved ramps and repaving is important for everyone who visits. One of the things I like seeing in the Sunken Garden is that families don't have to separate now, leaving behind a relative who might have trouble with the stairs. With the new ramps, the whole room is accessible, and gives families the chance to immerse themselves and experience Como all together.

 $-{\bf Laura\ Wake\ Wiesner},\ {\it Visitor\ Services\ \&\ Interpretive\ Programs\ Manager}$ 

Open every day of the year, and always free to every visitor, there are few destinations as inviting as Como. And thanks to your support, Como's more than 1.9 million visitors in 2024 found even more resources to access, discover, and appreciate throughout Como Zoo and the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory.

Water Garden Renewal | Como's ever-popular Victoria water platters made a long-awaited return thanks to pool and plumbing repairs provided by your contributions to Como Friends. One of the most Instagrammable locations on Como's campus also got a Minnesota makeover, with native aquatic plants that connect Como visitors to the wonders of the North Star State's woods and waterways.

New Pathways | The Charlotte Partridge Ordway Japanese Garden was made for meandering, but with rocky pathways prone to washing out, accessibility was becoming a problem for many visitors. To solve it, support from a Como Friends donor helped pave the

way with sturdier, stroller- and wheelchair-accessible asphalt that visitors will see this spring. With new ramps also installed in the Sunken Garden this year, and a smoother approach between the Visitor Center and the Primate Building, your contributions are helping to ensure that no corner of Como's historic campus is off-limits for visitors with mobility challenges.

Privacy Pods | Como is such a busy place, it's not always possible to find a quiet bench for nursing newborns. But thanks to a new lactation pod in the gateway between the Fern Room and the Palm Dome, young families can always find comfort and privacy as they tend to the needs of breastfeeding babies.

Bathroom Inclusion Project | With a core audience of young families, bathroom breaks also got a glow-up in 2024. Como's public restrooms are now equipped with step stools and Koala Seats to help make trips to the bathroom a little easier for kids and their caregivers.



With more than 1,000 animals of every shape, size, and species, caring for the diverse health demands of Como Zoo's animal ambassadors is a never-ending project. From vaccinations for tiger cubs Maks and Marisa to hoof care for Ivy the giraffe, your support equips Como Zoo's dedicated keepers and veterinarians with the tools and resources they need to keep the animals you know and love healthy and curious.

On-Site Vet Team | When zookeepers noticed that Mumford the lion was suffering from frequent nosebleeds, it was time to see the doctor—a process made much simpler thanks to Como Zoo's new on-site veterinary team. Supported by your contributions, this new approach to animal care helps to minimize stress for animals and allows veterinarians and keepers to collaborate more closely, managing multiple procedures to make the most of the time animals may have to be under anesthesia.

Behind-the-Scenes Bonding | With the arrival of tiger cubs Maks and Marisa, Como's large cat keepers promoted trust and protected the bond between Bernadette and her twins by giving the

threesome both the quiet time and the enrichment experiences that curious young cats need.

Orangutan Camera | With a troop of orangutans that are always up to something, Como Zoo's primate keepers can now monitor the action with new cameras that give them a view of the great apes when they're outdoors. Investments like this allow keepers to deliver great care, while encouraging animals to live their best lives.

Animal Care and Welfare Supplies | Two of the oldest polar bears in North America, roommates Nan and Neil get tender loving care from their keepers at Polar Bear Odyssey. In 2024, Nan got a top-to-bottom health workup to help her stay fit and feisty. Your support for Como Friends helps to ensure that Como Zoo's keepers and veterinarians have everything they need to support cutting-edge health care, including improved lighting, scales, feeding supplies, life support equipment, and enrichment to keep animals of all ages fit and thriving.

Cats are very observant, so when tiger cubs Maks and Marisa noticed their mom Bernadette was a little uneasy seeing us at the beginning, they hung back and took it all in. But now Marisa gets so excited about being fed that she lets out the cutest little scream. The two of them are just incredibly adorable. 99

-Jill Erzar, Senior Keeper



Within my first week here, every staff member I met apologized for gushing and going on about what they're interested in, whether that's staghorn ferns, or carnivorous plants, or orchids. That enthusiasm is why the plants here are so beautiful and well cared for, and I think the passion that people who work here have for plants evokes something in visitors as well. 9 9

- Ray Watson, Marjorie McNeely Conservatory Horticultural Curator

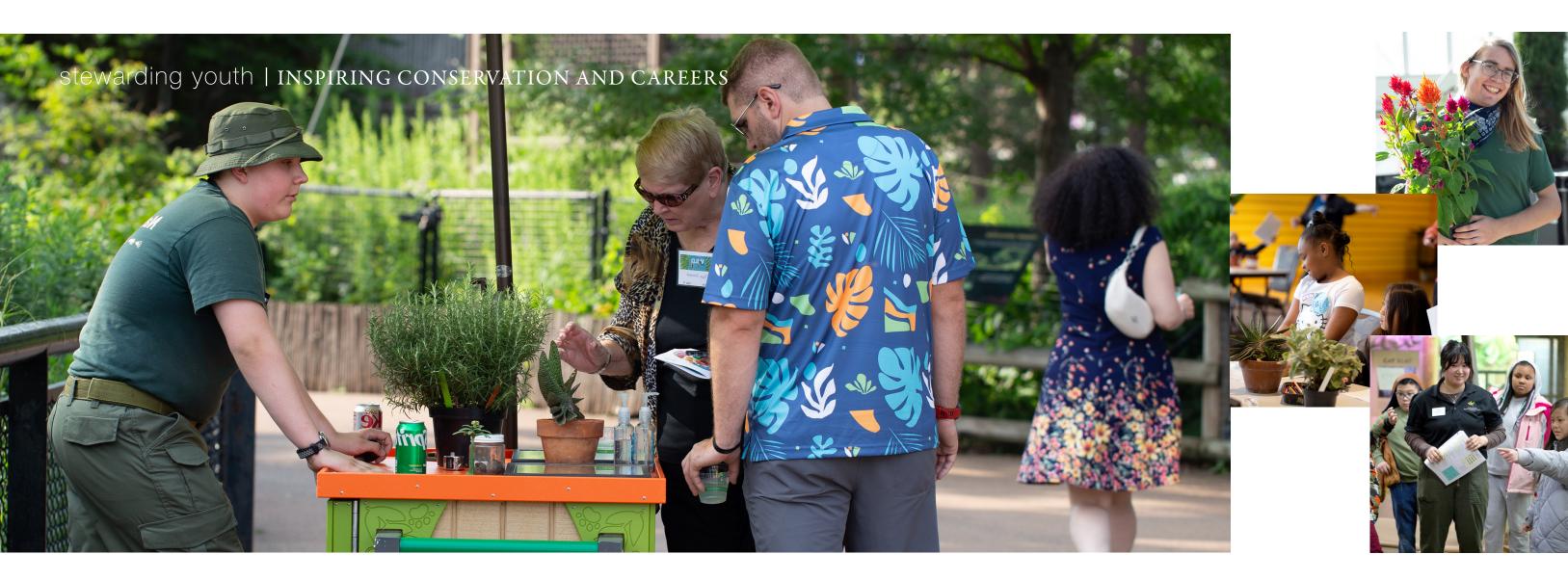
From the Minnesota Garden that greets visitors at Como's front door, to the beautiful bromeliads that shelter under the Palm Dome, nearly every plant you see on Como's campus got its start in the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory's 30,000 square foot growing range—seeds, bulbs, and plugs all brought to life behind the scenes. Your contributions to Como Friends are critical to this growth pattern, providing Como's talented team of horticulturists with the tools and resources they need to bring it all into full bloom.

Native Species | When bison roamed what's now Minnesota, they thrived in the oak savanna, a lost ecosystem Como horticulturists have been recreating around the campus. Paid for with contributions to Como Friends, little bluestem and blazing star are now some of the featured plants inside and surrounding Como Zoo's bison habitat. The Minnesota Garden is also being reimagined with the phased planting of a host of new native plants like rattlesnake master, prairie dropseed, false indigo, and prairie alumroot. Highlighting prairie and oak savanna plants helps to teach visitors about landscapes that pro-

mote pollinators and other wildlife, while healthy native plants are also more drought tolerant, strengthening Como's climate resilience.

Palm Pruning | The brighter feel of the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory's historic Palm Dome is all thanks to an extensive tree pruning project supported by Como Friends in 2024. Older palm trees in danger of breaking through the glass cupola were removed, while horticulturists rebalanced the design of the room with a beautiful understory of bromeliads and orchids.

Natural Habitat Upgrades | Plants and animals belong together, and your support helped put down new roots in several habitats. Como Zoo's orangutan, hoofstock, giraffe, and Dall sheep got new shade trees; the bird yard patio is now bordered with arborvitae; and the crowned cranes and nyala are now enjoying a new boma. Como Friends funding also helped purchase new oak and honey locust plantings that will improve Como's canopy for years to come.



With nearly 46 percent of visitors under the age of 18, Como Park Zoo & Conservatory has long been Minnesota's conservation class-room, teaching nearly 800,000 school-age visitors about the life-giving connections between animals, plants, and people. In 2024, your contributions to Como Friends deepened that commitment to youth development, ensuring the next generation stays connected to nature.

School Partnerships and Scholarship Programs | Como resumed its free field trip program with St. Paul second grade classrooms, offering free transportation and classroom programs to our closest school partner. Como Friends also supported scholarship programs and a new sliding fee scale for summer camps, ensuring that everyone has access to exceptional educational opportunities at Como.

Curriculum Updates | With a growing focus on fostering empathy with animals and plants, and more individual storytelling about the animals in Como's care, Como's education programs are all about encouraging visitors to make a more personal connection to the natural world.

Your support provided the education department with funds to purchase new interpretive tools and biofacts to pair with the new curriculum.

Right Track | Unpaid internships and volunteer gigs have often been the path to careers in animal care, but through St. Paul's Right Track program, Como is helping youth from cost-burdened households access career-building opportunities through paid part- and full-time apprentice programs on Como's campus. Your support helped to pay for uniforms, sturdy work boots, and other tools that Right Track's nine zookeeping and four horticultural apprentices need to be successful on the job.

School Bus Scholarship Fund | With transportation costs that have nearly doubled since the pandemic, Como Friends funding helps to ensure that busing costs aren't a barrier. Your support makes it possible for up to 30 classrooms to visit Como for field trips and environmental programs.

Nature Walk | Thanks to your support, Nature Walk volunteers connected with 36,092 visitors, most of them younger children, role modeling the ways that caring about conservation is cool.

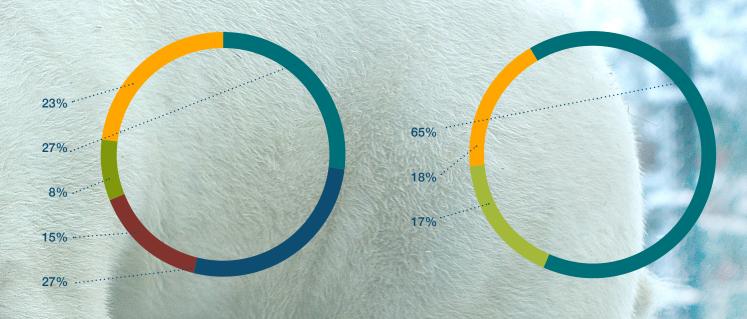
The overall curriculum of Nature Walk really does inspire a love for natural science in any capacity, and learning about animals and plants and being able to share that with people was really exciting. I know it really cemented conservation in my mind as something I want to continue doing. 99

-Wally Hlavac, former Nature Walk Volunteer

## Statements of | FINANCIAL POSITION

As of December 31,	2024		2023
ASSETS			
CURRENT			
Cash	\$ 1,288,834	\$	1,253,685
Certificates of Deposit Short-Term	3,478,104		3,309,469
Bequests Receivable	· 大學的一個		14,000
Contributions Receivable	104,634	6	160,865
Inventory	362,709	5 (2)	326,791
Prepaid Expenses and Other	98,176	100	92,082
Total Current Assets	5,332,457		5,156,892
OTHER			
Certificates of Deposit Long-Term	1,751,593		1,794,588
Contributions Receivable, Net of Current Portion and Unamortized Discount	766,587		813,042
Property and Equipment, Net	146,427		151,587
Beneficial Interests in Assets Held by Others	10,953,811		10,574,440
Total Other Assets	13,618,418		13,333,657
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 18,950,875	\$	18,490,549
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS			
CURRENT	Harpel In Miller		
Accounts Payable	\$ 51,144	\$	34,595
Accrued Expenses and Other Liabilities	108,051		-97,148
Total Current Liabilities	159,195		131,743
NET ASSETS			<b>全</b> 集集
Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions			1944
Board Designated Reserve and Project Funds	2,951,772		3,094,358
Board Designated Endowment	151,766		147,083
Undesignated	3,847,511		3,165,516
Total Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions	6,951,049		6,406,957
Net Assets with Donor Restrictions			
Perpetual in Nature	7,937,160		7,937,160
Purpose Restrictions	2,538,356		2,603,193
Time-Restricted for Future Periods	1,365,115		1,411,496
Total Net Assets with Donor Restrictions	11,840,631		11,951,849
Total Net Assets	18,791,680		18,358,806
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$ 18,950,875	\$	18,490,549
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND INCT ASSETS	ψ 10,950,015	Ą	10,490,349

## Statements of | ACTIVITIES



Sou	rces	of F	lever	nue	

Individual Giving	 \$1	,555,029
Gift Shop Revenue	 \$1	,580,935

(less cost of goods sold)

Corporate and Foundation Giving . . . . \$849,867

Events .....\$445,309

Investment and Other Income. . . . . \$1,345,558

#### **Program and Mission Support**

Como Friends operates Garden Safari Gifts in the Visitor Center of Como Park Zoo & Conservatory. Expenses . . . . . . . . \$971,250

Como Friends secures donations and generates revenues to invest in Como Park & Zoo and Conservatory. Expenses . . . . \$2,422,791

Mission Support

Fundraising Expense ..... \$921,513

Mission Support
Management Expe

Management Expense . . . . . . . . . . . . . \$917,054

## THANK YOU 2024 DONORS!

Como Friends' mission is to inspire community generosity in support of Como Park Zoo & Conservatory so it thrives for generations to come.

\$200,000 + Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation

\$100,000 - \$199,999 Estate of Germaine Gustafson

\$50,000 - \$99,999

Anonymous (2)

Blaze Credit Union

E.M. Pearson Foundation

Endowment Fund of Como

Friends

Marilyn and John Hay

Manitou Fund

Susan and Richard Pearson

Xcel Energy

\$15,000 - \$49,999 Anonymous **Ameriprise Financial** John and Susan Bauer **Best Buy Charlotte Partridge Ordway** Japanese Garden Endowment **Fund of Como Friends Cross Family Foundation Ecolab Foundation** Mary Fowler Fred C. and Katherine B. **Andersen Foundation** Dan and Denise Griep Deb and Mike Hogenson Horton Hugh J. Andersen Foundation Ruth and John Huss Estate of Margaret A. Lidstad McGough Companies Jenifer Myers

**Nicholson Family Foundation** 

Jane Richards
Annelda Schweiss
Securian
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Travelers Foundation

\$10,000 - \$14,999 Anonymous (2) Best Buy Foundation Bill Dircks, Jr. and Sherie Lukanen Carol Downie and Gregg Thomas Leanne Edberg Thomas Frattallone and Sebastian Vannavono **Guy Grove Family Foundation** Hardenbergh Foundation Nancy and Todd Koch Lancer Hospitality **Natural Habitat Adventures** Bill and Anne Parker Steve and Barb Proeschel U.S. Bank Foundation **Xcel Energy Foundation** 

\$5,000 - \$9,999 Anonymous (3) **Bame Foundation Estate of Betty Barrett** Amelia Beach **Grover Bellile** Harvey Benson Jan Bobrowske Patrick and Colleen Bollom **Boss Foundation** Amy and Shawn Carlson Roger Carlson Terri Cavanaugh **Audrey Copeland** Edith Dalleska D'Amico Hospitality **Dellwood Foundation** Deloitte Global Charles and Jacqueline Dietz Stephen Exarhos Fleetwood Foundation

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\$2,500 – \$4,999
Anonymous
21st Century Bank
3M Foundation
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Matching Gift Program
Andersen Corporation
Anderson & Koch Ford, Inc.

**Bartlett Tree Experts** Jewelie Grape John and DeAnne Bennett Lloyd W. Grooms, Jr. Kelly and Leland Bloch **Robert Harms Boyum Barenscheer PLLP** Kathy and William Haug The Head Family Foundation The Peter K. Brooks Fund Louise Bruce Stan and Jane Hooper Amy L. Hubbard and Robert and Janet Calander Paul and Ann Capeder Geoffrey J. Kehoe Rob Carlson and Gregg Larson James Johnson and Lucy Jones Ivy Celender Gail and Thomas Jones Cheney Family KathrynArtWorks Fund of the ity Club Foundation Saint Paul & Minnesota ob and Diane Coderre Fund of Foundation the Saint Paul & Minnesota Mr. Steven C. Keck and Foundation Ms. Lolita Keck David and Gretchen Crary James and Barb Kelzenberg **Emily Douglass Matt Kramer and Mary Rowles** Carol Ducharme Constance Krmpotich Ecolab Inc. Terry Lambert Lillian Wright & C. Emil Berglund Edy Ward Peter and Tamara Erickson Foundation Georgiann and Joseph Errigo Shawn and Tina Locke Peter Everett and Katie Gates **Margaret Rivers Fund** Ralph and Susan Farnsworth Mike Marholtz and Lynn Carlson itton E.S. Field and Nancy T. Colleen McGough-Wood and Field Foundation of the Saint **Brad Wood** Paul & Minnesota Foundation **Medtronic Foundation** itton Field, Jr. and Anne Field Michael Merrick like and Nicole Frattallone Kathryn Mueller aralyn Frisell Matt and Kelley Nelson

Nancy and Tom Nelson

John and Marla Ordway

comofriends.org

Osilas Foundation

Nick Nelson

olanda Fugelso

Lynette and Bob Palmgr Robert and Melanie Pari Erika and Roger Perrault Angela and John Rathbun Beth and Robert Schafer Schuetzle Charitable Fund Michelle Smeby Kay Smith Fund Erik and Pam Stegman Rupert Strobel **Sunrise Banks** Nancy Sweet Thayer Family Foundation of the Minnesota Community Foundation Paul and Janet Tolzmann U.S. Bank UnitedHealth Group Caroline Vernon Keith and Colleen Wietecki Mara and Tyler Wurm Sheryl and Mike Zaworski

\$1,000 - \$2,499 Abang Yoli Robin Adkins The Allegro Fund of the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation Aloe Up Sun & Skin Care Products Sarah Andersen and Christopher Hayner Anime Twin Cities, Inc.
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