

# WACF Youth Council still important for former member who's returned

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Time... there's a lot to be said about it.

"Times have changed." "All in good time..." "Time heals all wounds." "Time waits for no one..."

Many things can get better or worse with time. Some things, however, remain stable and steady over time.

The Watertown Area Community Foundation believes that one of those things is the WACF Youth Council. From the first Youth Council meeting in August 2001 to the upcoming one set shortly after the school year begins, six Watertown High School juniors and seniors will



Henderson



Here, Kristen Henderson, WACF Board member visits with the 2018-19 Youth Council. Henderson was on the first Youth Council in 2001. OK from left are Youth Council members Sydney Walker, Gracie Ebsen, Alyssa Roby, (Henderson), Tessa Holien, Braeden Kluver and Allison Kluver.

learn about nonprofit organizations in our community, learn leadership skills and make a difference.

That fact has come full circle with the passage of time, about 15 years.

Kristen (Bartelt) Henderson, who was on that first youth council, went to college. graduated. started a family. achieved her dream job, moved back

to Watertown and now serves on the WACF Board.

Henderson had the opportunity to speak to the Foundation's Youth Council earlier this 40th anniversary year. She spoke about her council days, what her life has been like since and coming back home. She also shared that no matter how much time

may pass, the lessons she learned from council will always accompany her.

"Times have changed, both in school and in the corporate world," Henderson told the group.

She explained that she worked in research and development for Boston Scientific – even serving on the Boston Scientific Foundation Board in Minnesota and working abroad with the company for a few years. In 2016, she and her husband Brooks decided to move back to Watertown to assist with her family's growing business, as well as raise their family.

In addition to serving on the WACF Board, Henderson is involved in several service clubs, active in the Excite Young Professionals group and serves on the Friends of the Goss board.

"Hindsight is 20-20," Henderson commented. "Looking back, just the discussions we had in youth council prepared me for the future, whether in corporate meetings or on various boards. Respectful dialogue helps you arrive at the best solution because you have such a diverse team working on it together. It's critical to hear from a diverse set of voices including youth."

Giving youth a voice was a big reason why the foundation implemented the council.

"I liked the idea of a youth council for three reasons," said Nancy Turbak Berry, who was on the WACF board at the time. "First, I wanted to get young people – particularly those with strong leadership skills – involved in philanthropy, to plant seeds in their individual lives that hopefully will bear fruit later.

Second, I wanted some of the money the foundation was spending on youth in our community to be spent only after consulting young people themselves, to help us target the most worthwhile projects. Finally, giving young people the opportunity to make decisions with real consequences is good practice for them. Generally, the more we trust and expect young people to make good decisions, the more they do so."

Henderson couldn't agree more.

"I very vividly recall that first meeting with Jan (DeBerg, WACF executive director) and the rest of the youth council," Henderson told the Foundation. "We had a discussion on what philanthropy meant. It was a pivotal time for me to really understand what it meant to donate my time, talent and treasure and impact the community that I was growing up in."

Henderson addressed this year's youth council.

"You're getting massive experience at a very young age," Henderson said. "You're setting yourself up for some big things with this experience."

Although the foundation doesn't know what every past youth council member is up to these days, it is aware that many have accomplished 'big things' and DeBerg hopes that their time on the Council was a step, if ever so small, on their way.

"Many former members have dropped in and visited over the years," DeBerg said. "I'm proud of them and all their achievements. Many are serving their respective communities in a variety of ways, are attending post-secondary school and, whether they currently live here or not, they still care about their hometown."

The youth council, De-

Berg added, has been a benefit for all of us.

"We've learned as much from them as they have learned from us," she said.

More than 60 students have been involved with the council since its inception. To date, more than \$140,000 has been awarded by the group to local youth-serving organizations and programs.

Youth council members take the grant-making very seriously and DeBerg notes that sometimes the discussions are extensive before a decision is made. Henderson recalled when DeBerg told not only the story of how the Foundation began with \$3,000, but also stories about donors.

"She truly conveyed the very important responsibility we had as a youth council – to judiciously recommend granting funds from these very generous gifts to serve the youth of Watertown," said Hen-

derson.

Time hasn't changed that responsibility, whether serving on the youth council or on the WACF Board. The diversity of the board, she says, is still essential in those in-depth discussions in serving donors' passions as well as the community.

"To this day, I'm always impressed with the givers in Watertown," Henderson commented. "And just as impressive are the groups that saw a need and started the Foundation. When I was called to be on the Foundation Board, I was elated. That has been a dream of mine. From that \$3,000 and the founders to the donors of today, the Community Foundation and its partnering organizations have made Watertown an exceptional community for raising a family."

What will the next 40 years bring?



# Recollections of former WACF Youth Council members

## Thad Titze

2007-2009 member, currently beginning his final year at the University of SD law school.

"At the time it helped me appreciate the needs in the local community that at that age I didn't even know existed. It also opened my eyes to all the resources, good leaders and people in our community that are able to step up and meet those needs. It takes a lot of organizations to meet those needs.

"Now, more than a decade later, I'm about to step into a professional career and I will see the opportunities to step onto another board. The Youth Council prepared me for future board service and showed me the importance of such things. If we took the Watertown Area Community Foundation out of our community there would be a huge void."



## Becky Weber

2007-2009 Past Youth Council member, returned to Watertown just one month ago and is an accountant at VRS PC.

"I was away for 10 years, living and working in Minneapolis. I loved it and miss it in a lot of ways but it was harder to find my place for getting involved, volunteering and that kind of community. Family and that opportunity for involvement is what brought me back - I knew if I really wanted to invest in my community, I would want it to be in the one I grew up in and I knew there are organizations like the Watertown Area Community Foundation that continue to invest in the community. That's important to know for young people to want to stay in Watertown or want to come back. The Foundation... being away for awhile and coming back...now I



have even more to offer.

"One thing that stood out to me was the Free Day at the Bramble Park Zoo that the Youth Council supported. As a kid growing up, I got to go to the zoo every year. In Youth Council, we learned that there were community members that really needed that grant because it was their only opportunity to go.

"The Watertown Community Foundation Youth Council helps young leaders learn the role of philanthropy in the community. Youth Council members often show a strong passion for leadership, and the mission of this board teaches them how to listen to community members on where needs exist in Watertown and connect those needs to other community members who want opportunities to give back. The Youth Council provides a unique experience to learn more about themselves and can instill a passion for giving back that will not only benefit them in the future, but more importantly benefit the communities they choose to be a part of."

## **Kirsten Titze**

2010-2012, currently a speech therapist for Mellette Elementary School in Watertown.

“It was interesting as a student to see how nonprofit organizations work in helping our community. There was a variety of different people with different interests on the Youth Council both years and that gave us good conversations about where the dollars would best serve the youth in our community. We had a certain amount to grant in front of us and we couldn’t give to everyone. It made us as high schoolers think more outside of ourselves; about our peers and community needs.”



## **Braeden Kluver**

2017-2019 Past Youth Council member, recently graduated from Watertown High School and will pursue a degree in secondary educa-

tion for history at Southwest State University in Marshall, MN, this fall.

“First and foremost, the Youth Council really taught me a lot about philanthropy and giving back to the community you’re in. It opened my eyes to the movers and shakers in our community that help out not for personal gain but for the betterment of everyone. Giving back helps you take pride in where you’re at.

“I was really happy we could fund the Stop at 90 effort (to raise awareness about child sexual abuse) and different organizations like Watertown Area Transit... all of the organizations are for a good cause so it’s never an easy decision.”

