

Rochester Area Foundation - News & Publications

Quote of the Moment...

KMTelecom Creates \$1 Million Endowment to Meet Community Needs

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In any moment of decision
the best thing you can do
is the right thing, the next
best thing is the wrong
thing, and the worst thing
you can do is nothing.

~Theodore Roosevelt ~

 E-MAIL TO A FRIEND

For more than a century, the Tollefson family of the Kasson-Mantorville area has played a vital role in their community. The family business, KMTelecom, connects area residents to each other and the outside world through local telecommunications services. In addition, members of the family have also been actively involved in community life since the company's founding in 1901. Now, with the recent creation of a \$1 million donor-advised fund managed by the Rochester Area Foundation, the family ensures that their history of community involvement and support continues far into the future.

Their substantial gift was possible due to a strategic investment made 15 years ago. KMTelecom, or Kasson & Mantorville Telephone Company as it was known at that time, along with other local telephone companies invested in cellular licenses, which through mergers and acquisitions eventually became Midwest Wireless. The recent sale of Midwest Wireless liquidated their investment and because of the family's commitment to charitable giving, the proceeds from this sale will be a bonus to the communities and charities they support.

"We could have found many different uses for this money," explains Mary Ehmke, KMTelecom Chief Operating Officer and one of two Tollefson daughters currently heading the company. "But we saw this as an opportunity to use a portion of the proceeds to establish an endowment to perpetuate our family's commitment to the community."

Jon Tollefson, President of KMTelecom and third-generation leader of the business, instilled in his daughters the drive to make contributions of both time and money to their community. Beth Tollefson, KMTelecom Chief Financial Officer explains, "We wanted to establish this fund to carry on the philosophy we've always been taught, to give back to the community that's supported us."

The endowment is also meant to serve the community long after this generation of Tollefsons has passed, while allowing future leaders of KMTelecom to carry on the family legacy. "The fund enables the next generation to continue what we know is very important," says Beth.

Although the fund is not designated for specific needs, the Tollefsons have traditionally supported many different charities, with the main focus of their giving being on education and economic development causes. The family anticipates that the majority of grants distributed from the earnings of this fund will be of a similar nature and will go to benefit the communities within KMTelecom's service area-Kasson, Mantorville, Rock Dell and Dodge Center.

"There's been a culture of supporting the community within this family-owned business," says Al DeBoer, Development Director at the Rochester Area Foundation. "We are pleased to partner with the Tollefson family in their desire to perpetuate a tradition of philanthropic leadership."

About Rochester Area Foundation

Rochester Area Foundation's mission is to strengthen community philanthropy by promoting responsible and informed giving and to assist donors in meeting their charitable objectives. The Foundation is dedicated to using its resources to improve the quality of life, promote greater equality of opportunities and to develop effective methods to assist those in need in the greater Rochester area. The Rochester Area Foundation makes grants in the fields

of arts and culture, community development, education, human services and recreation.
Learn more at www.rochesterarea.org.

About KMTelecom

Founded in 1901 by Herman M. Tollefson, KMTelecom has provided residents of Kasson, Mantorville and Rock Dell with telephone service for more than one hundred years. With the recent addition of Dodge Center to their service area, KMTelecom continues to offer its customers new products to meet their changing communication needs, including local and long-distance telephone service, high-speed internet access, web hosting and digital television. Currently run by the fourth generation of the Tollefson family, KMTelecom remains a local, family-owned company located in Kasson, MN. For more information, visit www.kmtel.com.

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