

DONOR PROFILE

Fresh Faces, New Fund

If you want to see the rising generation of community philanthropists, check out the S.E.E.D. Planning Group. Many of the partners and employees at this Binghamton-based business planning startup are under 35. In 2013, these young professionals made a major commitment to their neighbors, forming a donor-advised fund through the Community

Foundation.

S.E.E.D. (Stimulating, Exceptional, Ethical, Duty.) Planning Group helps businesses formulate strategies, including their plans for charitable giving. So chief executive officer Travis Maus knows full well how important it is to get

younger people involved in philanthropy.

“One of the pending crises we have right now with giving is that the donor base is getting older and shrinking,” says Maus. Younger people need easy ways to get involved, and they need help understanding the impacts of their gifts.

The new S.E.E.D.s of Hope Fund draws its support from two sources: employees of S.E.E.D. Planning Group contribute through payroll deductions, and the business donates a portion of its revenue.

Maus got the idea for the fund while serving on one of the Community Foundation’s grant review panels. He and his business partners were spending money to market their services, but they realized they could gain even more good will by dedicating some of their promotional dollars to worthy causes. “This helps to support our central message, that we’re part of the community and we care about the community,” he says.

Even before it started the S.E.E.D.s of Hope Fund, the S.E.E.D. Planning Group took an active role in the community, helping to raise money for nonprofit organizations such as the Magic Paintbrush Project and the Little League Challenger Division. The company established the new fund in July 2013. The founders expect to complete the initial funding by mid-2014 and then start choosing organizations to support.

When that time comes, they plan to keep their criteria fluid. “Sometimes, establishing too many guidelines makes it difficult to help people when



Check Presentation for 2nd Annual S.E.E.D. Planning Group Charity Golf Tournament



From left to right – Amber Belongia, Charles Randall, George Cummings, Kathleen Clark, Ryan Berkeley, Travis Maus and Mary Bowen.

they need it,” Maus says. “If somebody or something really needs help, we want to be able to say, ‘Okay, we’re here,’ without a lot of to-do.”

Part of the beauty of local philanthropy is that the donors can see the results of their gifts firsthand, Maus says. “The money is going directly to people we can point to and help, and we can make sure that it stays in the community.”