

The BISON Scholarship Fund

Seventeen Year Update



The BISON Fund Mission & Values

The BISON Scholarship Fund is a privately funded scholarship program for economically disadvantaged kindergarten through 8th grade children.

BISON believes that:

- **Children have a chance when families have choices** – when given the choice of which school their children attend, families are empowered to positively impact their children's future
- **Setting the right path early promotes success** – capturing children in grammar school years establishes the necessary foundation for continued success and learning;
- **When parents make a financial commitment, their children benefit** – As BISON's partners, parents must pay a minimum dollar amount every year. Together, our investments demonstrate a collective commitment to their children's success;
- **Investing in education is investing in our community's future** – when investing in a child, you are, personally, making that child's future happen.

Giving Families a Choice ~ Giving Children a Chance

The Board of Directors of the BISON Scholarship Fund presents our **17th Year Update** and extends sincere gratitude to our donors. In our first 17 years we have awarded 17,000 scholarships, with an economic value in excess of \$12,500,000 to economically disadvantaged families so their children have the opportunity to attend a private elementary school of their choice.

The tuition assistance BISON provides varies according to family income and size. Our maximum award is \$1,400 and the average is approximately \$900, and about 25% of the families are receiving the maximum assistance and each family must partner with us by paying a minimum of \$500 towards the tuition. This is a significant sacrifice for low-income families who could easily use these funds for other needs. However, they understand that a quality education for their children is the path to beating the cycle of poverty.

We determine the success of our program on how well the children do after 8th grade. In the years we have been tracking graduates, we know that approximately 65% of graduating 8th graders have gone on to private high schools and 30% to well performing public high schools. Our work is ongoing, but we know that at least **95%** of these children also graduated from high school. These are wonderful results!!! You can be assured that the investment you are making in these children is paying off.

We have BIG news!! This past May, we agreed to accept a \$600,000 grant from the Foundation of the Diocese of Buffalo. This funding will allow BISON to expand into the other seven counties of Western New York. Many economically disadvantaged families in the smaller cities, towns and villages in our area will now have the ability to apply to BISON for support. Initially, BISON was open to only City of Buffalo residents and now 17 years later, all eligible families in WNY will have the opportunity to – Give Families a Choice in their grammar school options and Children a Chance to better succeed. It is envisioned that this relationship with the Diocese will continue into the future.

In the 2010/2011 school year BISON was able to make 1,350 awards, costing \$1.2 million. This is approximately the same as the prior year and down from our high of two years ago. We have a very large waiting list of about 400 more eligible children who could receive assistance if we had the funds to support them. We look at our supporters as investors in the lives of these families who are making the sacrifice to give their children a chance at a private grammar school education.

The BISON Fund accomplishes this mission with a staff of two and a group of dedicated Board members and volunteers. So we encourage our supporters to also be ambassadors for BISON. Tell your friends about us, and visit us at our website: www.bisonfund.com.

Again, **Thank You** for your support of these children and be assured that you are making a difference in their present and future lives, giving them the chance to be productive citizens. In addition to strengthening families, we are helping to stabilize enrollments at private schools that provide a safe and academically sound environment – increasing options for everyone.

The BISON Scholarship Fund is the only kindergarten through 8th grade scholarship program in Western New York, and the fifth largest program of its kind in the country. In 17 years, BISON has made a significant impact on economically disadvantaged families who want school choice options for their children.

BISON's positive results are:

- In 17 years, BISON has awarded over 17,000 scholarships with an economic value of more than \$12.5 million – impacting the future of more than 11,500 families in our community;
- More than 65% of BISON graduates go on to a private high school of choice, and an additional 35% attend one of the top performing public high schools;
- 95% of BISON graduates contacted graduated from high school; nationally, 95% of children in the CSF programs nationally graduate from high school (compared to 48% in some public schools).

Who is eligible for a BISON Scholarship?

- Eligibility for consideration of a BISON Scholarship Fund award include: residing in Western New York.
- Families who have children entering Kindergarten through the 8th grade, and meet financial eligibility requirements (the scale is based on percent of poverty).
- Each year, applications for new BISON families are available from January through the end of April.
- For more information about the program, feel free to contact us or visit our website at www.bisonfund.com.

Make A Donation

Our demand for tuition assistance is very strong and we continually need to raise funds to make these awards possible! Please join us in helping to make a difference in the lives of so many children in our community. You can start by underwriting one child at \$900 for a year. Or, if possible, consider underwriting two children. Your support is greatly appreciated! Education is everything!

Consider BISON in Your Will

Education is the gift of a lifetime. Consider making a bequest of needed scholarship assistance in your will or estate plan to The BISON Scholarship Fund, Inc. Contact BISON or your attorney, accountant or financial advisor for more information and assistance.



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