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FOUNDATION CELEBRATES 20 YEARS OF GIVING

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Three-year-old Mikala Estoquia is someone who benefits from the work of the Wichita Community Foundation, and on Thursday she sang "You Are My Sunshine" to thank its members.

Then she gave an encore.

Mikala is a student at the Opportunity Project school, a pre-kindergarten school for children from economically disadvantaged families.

Her mother, Heather Reed, spoke to about 125 philanthropists at a meeting to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Wichita Community Foundation.

"For some families, access to good education can be a struggle," she said. "Thank you for caring about other people and the future, and for caring about our children."

Barry Downing, a founder of the Opportunity Project, was the featured speaker.

"Giving can be frustrating," Downing said. "It's difficult to decide which projects have the best chance to make a difference. We want to have an impact. It validates our purpose."

The foundation connects philanthropists with local nonprofit organizations, a service that is ever-evolving, said Phil Neff, foundation vice chairman.

"It's important that we watch diligently that we're moving in the right direction," Neff said. "It is a sign of good health of this organization that donors are using this foundation as a resource for their philanthropy."

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