The great changes I’ve seen in the climate and the conditions of the polar regions motivated me to form the Will Steger Foundation almost 10 years ago with the goal of educating people about the realities of our changing climate, as well as what they can do to stop it. Just this past year, when the maps of the polar vortex appeared (see front cover), showing its impact on the Eastern and Midwestern U.S., I was stunned. I’ve never seen a map like this. The North Pole weather was over the Midwest. The reality of it was shocking; it felt so out of place. It was just unbelievable.

Lack of climate literacy is a major hurdle in affecting change, which is why education is central to the work of the Will Steger Foundation. This means not only giving people the facts about climate change, but also giving them the opportunity to tell their own eyewitness stories, as well as identifying ways we can adapt our everyday lives to solve this problem. The answer lies in people coming together and transitioning to a low carbon economy, away from fossil fuels.

While we are still small in size and operate with a fairly lean budget, we are making a big impact in many ways. Because of the urgency of climate change and its implications for our economy, for our environment, and for today’s youth, we will continue to increase our impact every year. I believe the Will Steger Foundation gives hope and a vision for our children by providing a clear pathway for what we can do to stop it. Just this past year, when Will Steger’s compelling testimony and powerful citizen input compelled the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission to vote unanimously to retire the state’s largest coal-fired power plants.

We set ambitious goals for ourselves this past fiscal year and I am proud to say we met all of them, thanks to your continued support! This past year we revised our suite of curriculum resources, provided more professional development offerings for educators, held clean energy, climate and health forums with Will Steger, helped bring 200 Minnesota youth to the national climate summit Power Shift 2013, and built a stronger regional mentorship program between youth and climate nonprofit leaders.

We see progress happening at various scales and at different points in time. Sometimes our victories are incremental, such as providing an educator with climate and energy resources to use in the classroom. Sometimes we take a big step forward, such as when Will Steger’s compelling testimony and powerful citizen input compelled the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission to vote unanimously to retire the state’s largest coal-fired power plants.

This annual report highlights our impact from September 2013 through August 2014 and serves as a record of accomplishments, financial transparency, and as an illustrated guide to our successful programs.

Thank you for supporting our work! We look forward to sharing future successes with you. We encourage you to keep up with our activities via our monthly e-newsletter, website or social media, and as always we welcome your feedback and engagement in our work.

Sincerely,
Nicole Rom

Will Steger Foundation

LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Will Steger Foundation is committed to addressing and engaging people in solutions to climate change, an issue that we realize can be overwhelming and challenging to address. We know that progress happens at various scales and at different points in time. Sometimes our victories are incremental, such as providing an educator with climate and energy resources to use in the classroom. Sometimes we take a big step forward, such as when Will Steger’s compelling testimony and powerful citizen input compelled the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission to vote unanimously to retire the state’s largest coal-fired power plants.

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LETTER FROM OUR FOUNDER

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Sincerely,
Nicole Rom

Will Steger Foundation

WILL STEGER FOUNDATION OVERVIEW

The Will Steger Foundation educates and empowers people to engage in solutions to climate change.

We strategically support emerging youth leaders and educators to foster climate literacy and action. We recognize that youth will inherit the unprecedented effects of climate change and are among our most powerful advocates. We also recognize that educators are critical messengers of climate and energy literacy, and that schools and non-formal learning centers provide powerful examples of sustainability in communities.

In addition, we believe that to authentically address climate change, we need to connect people, heart to heart, place to place, aligning the issue with personal experience. Ultimately, solutions to climate change can only be realized through collective action towards our vision of a sustainable and equitable future for all.

We’ve begun to address the question: “What can WSF do to become more open, available, and useful to people of color and lower-income people?” Over the past year we organized a series of workshops and conversations about equity and inclusion, from which we created an equity statement and subsequent action plan.

EQUITY STATEMENT

WSF understands that climate change is a highly complex issue and that just and equitable solutions cannot be found if we proceed with the climate science and policy lens alone. We must take a comprehensive perspective of climate change impacts and solutions if we are to reach our goal and create the future we want to live in. WSF is committed to addressing the interface of economic and social disparities and is working closely with partners who understand this interface.

“Keep doing what you’re doing, because no one out there delivers the bang for the buck that you folks do.”

—R. MICHAEL C., SUPPORTER

Will Steger Foundation

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3
**EMERGING LEADERS**

The Emerging Leaders Program focuses on empowering Midwest youth climate leaders as a key strategy in transitioning to a just energy future. The Emerging Leaders Program works locally and across the Midwest to build youth capacity, facilitate shared strategies, and foster coordinated action on climate change solutions.

**YEA! MN**

Youth Environmental Activists Minnesota (YEA! MN) is a core Emerging Leaders Program that supports a network of high school environmental clubs working together across the Twin Cities Metro to empower student leadership on climate change solutions, enable cooperation between groups, and take coordinated action at home, at school and in the wider community.

YEA! MN is unique in that it is authentically student directed. Of the 10 high schools that participated in 2013, each student earth club completed at least one action project over the course of the year related to waste reduction, energy conservation, recycling and composting. The YEA! MN Steering Committee is comprised entirely of student leaders and in 2013, youth leaders represented 5 different Twin Cities metro high schools.

Youth from the following high schools participated in the 2012-2013 YEA! MN program:

- Northfield
- El Colegio*
- DeLaSalle
- Great River
- Hopkins*
- Minneapolis South*
- Minnesota Internship Center
- Charter High School
- Minnetonka
- Patrick Henry
- Northfield
- School of Environmental Studies*
- Southwest
- Stillwater
- St. Paul Central*

*Steering Committee Member

**MENTORSHIP PROGRAM**

This past year the Emerging Leaders Mentorship Program fostered strategic conversations across the Midwest by matching youth climate leaders and veteran staff, recognizing both as teachers and learners. The program aims to connect key leaders across the generational spectrum and unlock new solutions to shared problems across the environmental movement. The program was supported through four group calls, group emails, and blogs reporting back insights coming from conversations.

"I found [the mentorship program] gratifying - to share an experience with someone just starting his career brought a useful perspective that helped me think through some of the issues I am working on now."

—VETERAN STAFF LEADER

**EDUCATION**

The Education Program supports educators, students and the public by providing science-based interdisciplinary educational resources on climate change, its implications and solutions to achieve climate literacy. This is achieved through the sharing and development of curriculum and online resources, professional development opportunities for formal and informal educators, hosting public outreach events, and growing and maintaining regional and national partnerships.

The 2014 Summer Institute provided 60 educators with:

- Hands on sessions communicating climate change and energy concepts
- Confidence to share these concepts
- Awareness of the climate change and energy education standards (including Next Generation Science Standards)
- Skills to encourage experiential learning and to take students outside
- A framework for effective place-based climate change and energy education

Based on pre and post surveys, 100% of Summer Institute educators showed an increase in climate and energy literacy, as well as in their confidence to bring climate change concepts to their educational setting. Additionally, educators left with a sense of hope, reporting that they believe they can do something about climate change. Finally, 87% said they were likely or very likely to attend a future Summer Institute.

"Through YEA! MN, I’ve learned how organizations function, and about different ways to create change through policy, community, and in school. The experience has helped me think about how I can most effectively work on environmental issues after YEA! MN."

—SHIRA B., YEA! MN CO-CHAIR 2013-2014

"I have increasingly clear that the “emerging leaders” whom the WSF has mentored so wonderfully, are cultivating a different type of climate movement. It will be a movement with a scope wide enough to deeply engage with a vast array of social and economic injustice issues and see clearly how they are connected to climate change and environmental degradation."

—JOE K., WSF EQUITY CONSULTANT

"As a teacher, I cannot think of an organization in their realm of climate change education or area of expertise that more consistently delivers what my particular profession needs in terms of support."

—CRAIG J., SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

Our newest education project, Minnesota Stories in a Changing Climate received funding from the Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources. This two-year project aims to collect and share stories about the effects of climate change here in Minnesota through an interactive website, a Twin Cities Public Television (TPT) program, and forums and workshops around the state.

The National Science Teacher’s Association selected our Director of Education to identify resources that will help teachers implement the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) that finally address climate change.

"As a teacher, I cannot think of an organization in their realm of climate change education or area of expertise that more consistently delivers what my particular profession needs in terms of support."

—CRAIG J., SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES
WSF BY THE NUMBERS

MENTORSHIP PROGRAM:
- 40 PARTICIPANTS
- 35 ORGANIZATIONS
- 20 MATCHES
- 6 STATES

MINNESOTA CLEAN ENERGY & JOBS CAMPAIGN:
- 1,500 POSTCARDS
- 3,000 PHONE CALLS
- 1,000 PEOPLE AT RALLIES

MN SOLAR STANDARD PASSED

10 TWIN CITIES HIGH SCHOOLS ACTIVE IN YEA! MN
2,000 YOUTH REACHED THROUGH THE EMERGING LEADERS PROGRAM

SUMMER INSTITUTE FOR CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY EDUCATION:
- 60 EDUCATORS
- 6 STATES
- 3 DAYS

200 MINNESOTA YOUTH AT POWER SHIFT

Warmest months ever recorded on the planet:
- MAY
- JUNE
- AUGUST 2014

345 DONORS

Twitter: 3,550 FOLLOWERS
Facebook: 8,901 FANS
Website: 94,224 VISITORS ANNUALLY

11,400 public comments to shut down Xcel Energy coal burner in Minnesota

20 High school students met with Keith Ellison to discuss environmental justice

4 climate and energy literacy webinars viewed by 550 participants in 30 states and 3 countries

75 YOUTH MET WITH GOVERNOR DAYTON TO DISCUSS MINNESOTA’S CLEAN ENERGY FUTURE

200 YOUTH AT POWER SHIFT
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US Green Building Council

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Common Roots
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Green Body
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Indeed Brewing Company
Midwest Mountaineering
Mosaic Cafe
Northeast Social
Pat’s Tap
Peace Coffee
Pirigis Northwoods Community
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Kara P
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The Hub
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