

PROFILE:  
**Sinner  
Bresnahan  
Healthy Kids  
Initiative**



ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE  
(L to R)  
Shelly Sinner  
Tom Bresnahan  
Jess Toop  
Bernie Sinner (back row)  
Scott Sinner  
Erin Prochnow  
Todd Sinner

**\$72,500**  
Given to and  
around the  
Casselton  
community

Initiated the  
BackPack  
Program at  
Central Cass  
School District

**100%**  
Employee  
participation  
at SB&B

**\$20,896\***  
Raised in 2015

\* Total includes \$4,000 match

What started as a series of raging toothaches for an underprivileged teenage boy ended months later after an unexpected chat with a local farmer that left them both misty-eyed.

The two weren't supposed to meet. At least not in Casselton, N.D., where, like in most rural communities, charity and hardship prefer anonymity.

Call it an accident, or maybe serendipity.

For Tom Bresnahan, the farmer who chairs the local Sinner Bresnahan Healthy Kids Initiative, it was an everlasting reminder of how rewarding helping others can be.

For the boy, a high school junior who had never been to a dentist, it was an opportunity to express his thanks for the extensive dental care that literally changed his life.

"I can't remember why I went to the school that day, but while I was there I stopped in the nurse's office just to see how things were going," Bresnahan said. "The boy was in the office and the nurse introduced us. We started talking and then both of us began choking up a bit. A few tears flowed. It was quite a moment."

Anonymity may have its place, but nothing beats a heartfelt epiphany.

The Sinner Bresnahan Healthy Kids Initiative Fund is a charitable giving fund established at Dakota Medical Foundation to focus on childhood health issues.

Since its founding in 2010, the initiative has awarded more than \$72,000 to the health-care needs of Casselton area children—from filling backpacks with healthy snacks and foods weekly through the school year (for 26 kids in 2014) to paying for prescriptions or chemical dependency treatment, to providing a bed to a child who didn't have one, including his first pillow ever.

"What convinced us to partner with DMF is the benefit of matching funds," Bresnahan said. "A \$100 gift to us on Giving Hearts Day can quickly turn into \$400, or \$500 to \$2,000, because not only does DMF match that gift, but our company does too, and usually we find another benefactor or two to match it again. It's like a gift that keeps on giving. And DMF handles all the administration, so every penny goes to the cause."

Dakota Medical Foundation oversees the administration of the fund at no charge so the Sinner and Bresnahan families can focus on helping people, not on paperwork.

The initiative's goal is to raise at least \$15,000 a year through Giving Hearts Day, and they've bested that mark five years running.

Bresnahan is one of seven family partners who manage Sinner Bros. & Bresnahan, a large-scale agribusiness that produces, processes and supplies non-genetically modified and organic crops worldwide. It's headquartered in Casselton (pop. 2,329), 20 miles west of Fargo, where the company manages 4,500 acres and feeds 4,000 cattle annually. The enterprise includes high-tech processing plants in Casselton and in Bloomer, Wis., with annual combined output of 2.5 million bushels.

"Our great-grandfathers settled this land more than a century ago and our parents partnered together in 1952. They gave a lot back to this community and we, now in our fifth generation, want to continue that tradition."

The initiative chose child healthcare as its focus after DMF President Pat Traynor suggested they survey the family for ideas, Bresnahan said, "But we took it a step further and polled more than 60 relatives, company employees and community leaders."

Poverty in a small town is often more reclusive than in urban areas. Finding children in need, or families willing to accept help, can be a challenge. Central Cass school district covers over 400 square miles and enrolls nearly 875 students.

"So we rely mostly on the eyes and ears of teachers, along with pastors and other local contacts who see the kids every day," Bresnahan said.

Besides Giving Hearts Day, the Casselton initiative also raises money through a community feed sponsored by Petro Serve, and from the profits on the crops they grow on 12 acres of land donated by Ottertail Power and Martin's Lutheran Church.

It may take a village to raise a child, but sometimes it takes a conscientious business to raise the ante.

**Sinner Bresnahan  
Healthy Kids Initiative**

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