



**NISWONGER  
FOUNDATION**

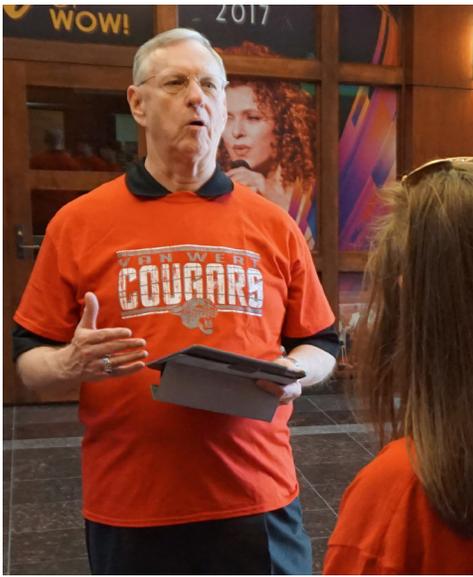


**Building on a  
Strong Foundation**



**Annual Report  
2018**





# A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN & FOUNDER

## *A Strong Foundation Coming of Age*

**B**irthdays are a good time for reflection. The Niswonger Foundation celebrated its seventeenth birthday this year. As we just completed the selection process for the newest class of Niswonger Scholars, it occurred to me that they, too, are in their seventeenth year.

That is the age at which most of us begin to appreciate the significance of what we can accomplish, while becoming increasingly aware that the decisions we make are formative and set the course for the rest of our lives. For our newest Scholars, those are decisions about which college to attend, selecting a career pathway, ensuring that first resume is creditable, and taking the initial steps in what I have been told they call “adulting.” While our new Scholars are among the best and brightest high school seniors, they openly discuss the stress they feel about making decisions that will set the proper course for the future. That kind of stress is healthy, the basis for the same intentional thought the Niswonger Foundation’s leadership is giving to the next seventeen years.

The good news is that we are operating from a position of strength. Our extraordinary school programs are the direct results of what happens when you work in partnership. The sustained work of the consortium of school systems served by the Niswonger Foundation is envied across the nation. This momentum is fed by a belief that *Building on a Strong Foundation* often means selecting courage over comfort.

The next step is to strategically move into the future. Like our Scholars, that courage must measure every action based on the perceived consequences. While a strong foundation is important for any successful partnership, it is even more valuable when you consider if change should occur, where the greatest vulnerabilities exist, and when “we have always done it that way,” is not an acceptable answer. A real leader understands that a “*To Stop*” list can be even more valuable than a “*To Do*” list.

What we learned is that to achieve sustainability for the valuable programs we have created it was imperative to become a charitable foundation. For years, we have known that partnerships were the “bridge building” part of our work. Through this change, we now know how much more powerful our mission “*to create opportunities for individual and community growth through education and other sustainable projects*” can be with the receipt of private gifts and donations.

For the first time, there is a return envelope in our Annual Report. As you read about the creative, cost-effective and successful work, consider if you will become a more active participant in impacting the lives of over 120,000 children in our region by providing financial support. This year, we more than doubled our financial investment to ensure that students will be “*college and career ready*” through external gifts and grants.

Like our new Scholars, we are proud of past accomplishments, but recognize that every decision is formative and will make its mark on the future. If there is one thing I have learned, rarely is there an easy way to do something important.

We are *Building on a Strong Foundation*. Come join us!

Scott M. Niswonger  
Chairman and Founder

# A STRONG FOUNDATION OF PARTNERSHIP

## *Niswonger Consortium ~ School Partnerships*

Seventeen years ago, the Niswonger Foundation was established with the belief that all children should be provided an educational environment that encourages and supports preparation for a productive future. Partnerships are designed to provide the opportunity for schools in Northeast Tennessee to help students achieve their greatest dreams. Designed for the specific challenges of rural education, these projects are established to be:

- **rigorous, relevant and cost effective;**
- **informed by innovation best practices;**
- **research-based;**
- **sustainable; and**
- **always be in partnership.**



The word “partnership” is key to a proven record of success. Locally, classroom teachers, school leaders, counselors, parents and communities are essential elements in the success of our work. Additionally, the Niswonger Foundation has drawn an impressive array of state and national partners, leveraging their strength alongside that of our school systems and our exceptional staff.

## *Current Year Grant Highlights*

- **Walmart Foundation** – Completed the first year of a \$450,000 three-year grant focused on kindergarten through second grade literacy development in Hancock County. .
- **Annenberg School Fund for Children** – Utilized a \$50,000 grant in support of literacy enrichment in Hancock County Elementary School and Carter’s Valley School, Hawkins County.
- **John Tweed** - \$130,000 for CareerConnect, a career readiness program in Greene County.
- **John Deere, Amsee, LTD, and Plus Mark Corporation** - \$11,000 in support of CareerConnect.
- **Care Foundation of America** – Completed year-two of a \$1,625,000 three-year grant to support the NiswongerCARE College and Career Advising Program.
- **Johnson and Associates, LLC; Pal Barger, Jr.; Delta Dental; and Brotherton Family Foundation** – \$350,000 in support of NiswongerCARE College and Career Advising.
- **Care Foundation of America** – Completed year-one of a \$562,500 three-year grant in support of NiswongerCARE Online, supporting rural school systems across the State of Tennessee.
- **United States Department of Education** – Completed year-one of a \$8-million-dollar five-year Education, Research and Innovation (EIR) grant to improve middle grades literacy development.



# Current Year Partnership Highlights

## Literacy Development

- **Literacy Initiative Focused on Effectiveness (LIFE)** combines the best practices in early grades literacy instruction to ensure that students are reading on grade level by third grade. This program is currently serving 18 classrooms in Greene and Hancock Counties. The Hancock County initiative includes a Place-Based-Learning design.
- **Rural LIFE** is serving 18 schools systems/36 middle schools using personalized learning strategies with the goal of focusing on literacy to improve academic achievement for students in grades six through eight. This program is funded by an 8 million dollar/five-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

## Professional Learning

- **Advanced Placement (AP)** support for teachers to attend AP Institutes (20 in the current year; over 500 in the past eight years);
- **Leadership for Blended Learning** supports school use of technology in classrooms;
- **Principal Leadership** support for first-year principals;
- **Regional Summit on Children** uniting education, business, health care, children's services non-profit organizations, etc. with a mission to understand and support children in poverty;
- **School Success Symposium** united nearly 1000 educators to learn from the region's best educational practices; and
- **Counselor Convening** provides kindergarten – university counselors with professional learning and best practices opportunities.
- **Keynote Speakers** included Liz Murry, author of *Breaking Night...Homeless to Harvard*; Jeanette Walls, author of *The Glass Castle*; and Dr. Tammy Pawloski, authority on teaching children in poverty.

**Niswonger Online** had record-setting enrollments in an expansive offering of coursework to middle and high school students including courses in, Advanced Placement, Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, Fine Arts, Foreign Languages, Career/Technical, Mathematics and Physical Education.

- Online courses to other Tennessee rural communities is being provided through a partnership with the Care Foundation of America.
- Dual Enrollment partnership with East Tennessee State University provides over 60 online college level courses and course pathways through Niswonger Online.

**College and Career Advising** – Thirty-one high schools, 29,000 students, receive college and career advising through the NiswongerCARE program. Students are assisted with financial aid applications (FAFSA), college applications, career exploration/college planning, ACT test registration, scholarship searches, Tennessee Promise and Hope Scholarship eligibility and informational meetings for families.

**CareerConnect** completed the second pilot year for students in Greene County and Greeneville City Schools. Now, prepared to expand throughout the region, this career and technology focused program is currently introducing 300 students to soft skills development, career choices and employment opportunities available in their communities.

**Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)** was the focus of 11 middle-grades and high school technology camps in partnership with East Tennessee State University.

For the sixteenth year, the Niswonger Foundation provided curriculum based **Young People's Symphony Concerts** to over 2000 students in partnership with the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra.

**Story Arts** is the focus of a partnership with the National Storytelling Center to provide live streaming of the International Storytelling Festival throughout the region and to countries around the world. Additionally, this partnership provides for teacher workshops to enhance classroom skills and provides access to storytelling events for underserved children.



# A STRONG FOUNDATION OF SCHOLARSHIP & LEADERSHIP

## *The Niswonger Scholars*

**T**he Niswonger Foundation's Scholarship and Leadership Program is building a strong foundation of leaders, many of whom have already returned to Northeast Tennessee. We know of no other Scholarship and Leadership program like ours in the United States. Niswonger Scholars are selected through a nomination process that seeks to identify the region's best and brightest future leaders. They are given the opportunity to attend the college or university that will best prepare them for success in their field of study, while participating in our four-year leadership program. Through an emphasis on leadership, business management, community service and ethical decision making, the Scholars are provided travel, training, internships, and personalized support to become model leaders and citizens of the world. There are 96 individuals who hold the distinction of being Niswonger Scholars.

What makes this program unique to all other scholarships is that the goal is to identify and develop leaders for Northeast Tennessee. These students commit to returning, within seven years, to Northeast Tennessee to work in their chosen career one year for each year they receive our scholarship. The plan is that by enabling these students to pursue their academic passion and by cultivating their leadership abilities, they will be committed to returning to their "roots" and being catalysts for the growth and improvement of their communities.

While Scholars understand that one person's life can have a great impact, the power of the network of Scholar Alumni is key to building a strong foundation. Through the hands of 72 Alumni, one can witness, firsthand, what happens when greater challenges are faced together. Examples of

Alumni involvement include formal and informal meetings, serving as mentors to undergraduate Scholars, assisting with internship and research placements, and presentations at Scholars training. Importantly, most of the selection committee for new Scholars is made up of Alumni. This ensures their support for the success of the new Scholars and a commitment to select those who will bring more strength to the network.



Alumni are taking leadership roles in many career paths. These include medicine, business, nursing, public health, pharmacy, engineering, K-12 and higher education, counseling, and non-profit management. In addition to professional roles, Alumni are exhibiting leadership skills in their communities through civic clubs, non-profit organizations, and the faith-based community. Alumni are serving in roles that support the State of Tennessee. As an example, Nick Darnell, teacher at East Ridge Middle School, in Morristown, was selected to serve on the Governor's First Teacher Cabinet, and was recently appointed to the State Board of Education.

## *Current Scholarship and Leadership Highlights...*

- Nineteen Scholars studying in fourteen universities with twelve distinct career paths.
- Five new Scholars selected for 2019, representing five school districts and high schools.
- Seventy-Two Alumni contractually committed to "return" to Northeast Tennessee.
- Thirty-six Alumni have already met their contractual commitments to return to the region.
- Fifteen career paths represented by the Alumni who have already returned.
- Forty-seven Alumni pursuing, or having completed, advanced studies in graduate schools across the country.
- This year, Scholars completed 1600 hours of community service, serving in over 40 community organizations.
- Scholars are encouraged, and financially supported, to pursue internships, study abroad, service abroad, campus leadership, and community engagement.
- *Niswonger Scholars are carrying out the distinct mission to "Learn-Earn-Return."*

## Current Niswonger Scholars

### Class of 2022

Aubrie Strange (*Samford University*)  
Sarah Douthat (*University of Tennessee-Martin*)  
Rithvik Vutukuri (*Tulane University*)  
Alexis Harvey (*Tennessee Technological University*)  
Jasmine Martin (*University of Tennessee-Knoxville*)



### Class of 2021

Levi Blazer (*Belmont University*)  
Lorraine Hayes (*Wake Forest University*)  
Emily Ellison (*Clemson University*)  
Brittany Church (*Austin Peay State University*)  
Tyler "Ty" Myers (*University of Tennessee-Chattanooga*)



### Class of 2020

Kori Smith (*University of Tennessee-Knoxville*)  
Tanner Shivley (*Carson-Newman University*)  
Christian Dalton (*University of Tennessee-Knoxville*)  
Elijah "Bo" Pless (*Milligan College*)



### Class of 2019

Zachary Ward (*University of Tennessee-Knoxville*)  
Morgan Thomas (*Clemson University*)  
Trenton Yount (*University of Tennessee-Knoxville*)  
Courtney Johnson (*Maryville College*)  
Matthew Widener (*East Tennessee State University*)



### Graduates - Class of 2018

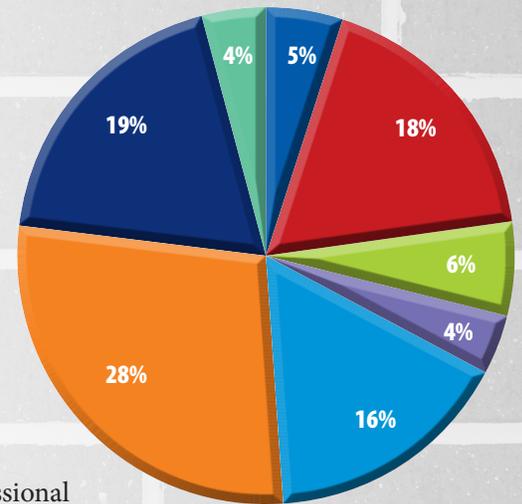
McKenzie Reynolds (*University of Tennessee-Knoxville*)  
Hope Adkins (*Carson-Newman University*)  
Dillan Shults (*Tennessee Technological University*)  
Kristen "Alora" Ricker (*Milligan College*)  
Madeline Standbridge (*University of Tennessee-Knoxville*)



# GRANT MAKING

As an operating foundation, the majority of Niswonger Foundation funding is directed to School Partnerships and the Scholarship and Leadership program. Up to ten percent of the total annual operating budget can be used by the Niswonger Foundation to assist with important projects that are identified through proposals from schools, school districts and other not-for-profit agencies. These mini-grants provide for exploration into creative educational activities, start-up projects, one-time unique educational experiences, and assistance with other areas of great need in the community. Over \$2,100,000 has been dedicated to grant making in the Niswonger Foundation's seventeen-year history. More than 400 mini-grants have been awarded.

Grant Making 2017-2018



- Arts in Education (\$3,000)
- Classroom Instruction (\$9,934)
- Cultural Enrichment (\$3,470)
- Professional Development (\$2,000)
- State and Regional (\$9,000)
- Disadvantaged Youth (\$16,500)
- Health and Environment (\$11,000)
- Youth Leadership (\$2,300)

# ADVOCACY

The mission of the Niswonger Foundation is firmly placed in the First Congressional District of Northeast Tennessee. However, the Staff of the Niswonger Foundation recognizes the need for leadership, and an informed voice, in support of a strong educational system in Tennessee and beyond. As examples, staff members are represented as Board Members, and among the leadership, of the following organizations:

- Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) Board
- Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association (TICUA) Board
- State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE) Board and Steering Committee
- Tennesseans for Quality Early Education (TQEE)
- Tennessee College Access and Success Network (TCASN) Board
- Governor's Academy of School Leaders
- Complete Tennessee Board and Steering Committee
- Governor's Books from Birth Advisory Board

# NISWONGER FOUNDATION PHILOSOPHY

The Niswonger Foundation was established in 2001 to make a positive and sustainable difference in education in Northeast Tennessee. This dream was envisioned by Scott M. Niswonger, who founded Landair Transport, Inc. and Forward Air Corporation. These companies were the first two Greeneville-based companies to be taken public in the history of Greene County, Tennessee. Jointly, the companies have combined annual revenue of over one-billion-dollars and employ more than 5000 people.

With the success of his two companies, the philosophy of "Learn - Earn - Return" was created. Using the innovative model of having a private, for-profit logistics company, Landair Transport, support a not-for-profit educational foundation, the goal of bringing rigorous, relevant, and cost effective programs to public education became a mission.

School Partnerships are designed for the specific challenges of rural education. Fundamental to the success of the Niswonger Foundation has been a clear focus on removing constraints to educational innovation and problem solving, thus allowing local school systems to better provide for student needs. These efforts have gained national attention resulting in the receipt of

two significant grants from the U.S. Department of Education and numerous other national organizations.

We know of no other Scholarship and Leadership program like ours in the United States. Niswonger Scholars are selected through a nomination process that seeks to identify the region's best and brightest future leaders. Scholars are given the opportunity to attend the college or university that will best prepare them for success in their field of study, while participating in our four-year leadership program. What makes our program unique is that these students commit to returning to Northeast Tennessee to work in their chosen career, one year for each year they receive the scholarship

The Niswonger Foundation expands its philosophy of "Learn - Earn - Return" beyond Northeast Tennessee through involvement in numerous state and national educational initiatives. Additionally, the Foundation shares a percentage of the operating funds for grants to other not-for-profit agencies for programs that support the Foundation's mission:

*"To create opportunities for individual and community growth through education and other sustainable projects."*

# STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

June 30, 2018

## ASSETS

Restricted Cash	\$ 504,273
Program Accounts Receivable	42,409
Federal Grants Receivable	22,793
Investments	8,655,972
Prepaid Expenses and Other Assets	600
Student Loans Receivable	154,831
Collections	101,861
Property and Equipment	<u>1,350,527</u>

**Total Assets** \$ 10,833,266

## LIABILITIES

Bank Cost	\$ 142,408
Accounts Payable and other Accrued Liabilities	21,411
Line of Credit	295,177
Demand Notes Payable to Primary Benefactor	1,136,826
USDA Loan	<u>886,842</u>

**Total Liabilities** \$ 2,482,664

## NET ASSETS

Unrestricted	7,827,237
Temporarily Restricted Net Assets	<u>523,365</u>

**TOTAL NET ASSETS** 7,352,602

## TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

\$ 10,833,266\*

*\*The Niswonger Foundation distributed \$ 2,587,000.00 to educational programs and scholarship awards in fiscal year 2018.*

## With Appreciation to Contributors to the Niswonger Foundation (July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018)

- Amsee, Ltd.
- Allen and Julie Barnett
- Fred "Pal" Barger, Jr.
- The Brotherton Foundation
- Joann Brouillette
- CARE Foundation of America
- Consumer Credit Union
- Andy Czajkowski
- Delta Dental
- Dennis and Donna Depew
- C. E. Dinsmore
- Harold and Dr. Nancy Dishner
- Dr. Tracy Dobbs
- James F. Durham
- East Tennessee Forest Products
- Eastman
- Michael and Rita Hess
- John Honeycutt
- John Deere Corporation
- Johnson Commercial Development
- Allen Johnson -Greenville Oil and Petroleum, Inc.
- Charles Koch
- Dr. Edward Kormondy
- Landair
- Sam Miller
- Scott M. Niswonger
- Plus Mark
- Bill Purmort-Central Mutual Insurance
- Rural School and Community Trust
- Ricky and Robin Shepherd
- State Farm Insurance
- Gary Taylor
- Tom Turnwald
- John Tweed
- United Way of Washington County
- United States Department of Education
- Walmart Foundation
- Your Cause Corporate Giving

# AN OPERATING FOUNDATION

**T**he Niswonger Foundation was founded by businessman and philanthropist Scott M. Niswonger. Unlike most private foundations, the Niswonger Foundation was established as an operating foundation with its own programs and projects. The Foundation is also approved as a charitable organization. Although a percentage of its operating funds go towards grant making, most funds go into the Foundation's two primary programs – a scholarship and leadership program for selected college students committed to returning to the region and partnership programs for schools.



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS

**SCOTT M. NISWONGER**  
Chairman and Founder

**NIKKI L. NISWONGER**  
Secretary

**KATHY O'DELL**  
Treasurer

**DR. NANCY DISHNER**  
President & CEO,  
Niswonger Foundation

**DAVID A. GOLDEN**  
Senior Vice President  
Chief Legal & Sustainability Officer  
Corporate Secretary, Eastman

**ALAN LEVINE**  
Executive Chairman,  
President & CEO  
Ballad Health

**JOHN TWEED**  
Executive Vice President,  
Chief Operating Officer  
Landair Transport

## NISWONGER FOUNDATION LEADERSHIP

**DR. NANCY DISHNER**  
President and CEO

**DR. RICHARD KITZMILLER**  
Vice President

**LARRY NEAS**  
Director, Special Projects

**DENISE ARNOLD**  
Director, College and Career Advising

**LAW LOVING**  
Director, CareerConnect

**GINA PAVLOVICH**  
Director, Niswonger Online

**BARBARA BATES**  
Executive Assistant

**KATHY O'DELL**  
Office Manager

**ANITA KILBOURNE-GREER**  
College and Career Advising

**SHAWN STEWART**  
College and Career Advising

**AMANDA CARPENTER**  
Greene County Literacy Specialist

**SARA HOLT**  
Hancock County Literacy Specialist

## RURAL LIFE

(U.S. DEPT. OF EDUCATION EIR LITERACY GRANT)

**DR. RICHARD KITZMILLER**  
Project Director

**DR. RICHARD BALES**  
Director of Instructional Practice

**LARRY NEAS**  
Compliance Officer

**JOHN PAYNE**  
Director of Technology and Innovation

**PAM HOLBEN**  
Literacy and Communications Coordinator

**STELLA HUNTER**  
Administrative Assistant

## LITERACY COACHES

**BROOKE DRINNON**  
**MARY McINTYRE**  
**KRISTI SNYDER**

**CANDACE HERMAN**  
**LORI ROARK**  
**LINDA STUART**

**SARA KITZMILLER**  
**ALLISON SEELEY**  
**BEN WILLINGS**

## COLLEGE AND CAREER ADVISORS

**LOGAN BLANKENBECKLER**  
**ALLISON EASTRIDGE**  
**LUCAS HITECHEW**  
**ADRIA SHANNON**

**TYLER BRACKINS**  
**ANDREW GRAY**  
**MARY KERNS**  
**HUNTER SHIPLEY**  
**TAYLOR WARD**

**GUILI COLLETT**  
**NELLIE GREER**  
**EMILY RAY**  
**ALLISON TURBYFIELD**

## NISWONGER COLLEGE AND CAREER READY CONSORTIUM LEADERSHIP

**DR. REBA BAILEY**, Hawkins County Schools (*Interim*)  
**MS. SANDRA BURCHETTE**, Newport City Schools  
**DR. WILLIAM FLANARY**, Washington County Schools  
**MRS. REBECCA ISAACS**, Rogersville City Schools  
**DR. GARY LILLY**, Bristol City Schools  
**MR. MANNEY MOORE**, Cocke County Schools  
**DR. JEFF PERRY**, Hamblen County Schools  
**MR. TONY SEAL**, Hancock County Schools  
**MR. STEVE STARNES**, Greeneville City Schools  
**MR. TOM DAVENPORT**, Care Foundation of America

**DR. STEVE BARNETT**, Johnson City Schools  
**MR. JOHN ENGLISH**, Unicoi County Schools  
**DR. COREY GARDENHOUR**, Elizabethton City Schools  
**DR. SHANE JOHNSTON**, Jefferson County Schools  
**MR. DAVID McLAIN**, Greene County Schools  
**DR. JEFF MOORHOUSE**, Kingsport City Schools  
**MS. EVELYN RAFALOWSKI**, Sullivan County Schools  
**MS. MISHELLE SIMCOX**, Johnson County Schools  
**DR. KEVIN WARD**, Carter County Schools  
**NISWONGER FOUNDATION LEADERSHIP TEAM**

NISWONGER



FOUNDATION



NISWONGER FOUNDATION TEAM



For More Information Contact:

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[www.niswongerfoundation.org](http://www.niswongerfoundation.org)