

This is Bethany.

Bethany is a freshman at Lamoní High School, in Lamoní, Iowa.



As recently as two years ago, Bethany was, in her words, a bad role model. "I got into trouble at school pretty often for talking too much," she says. "I didn't do my homework."

"The good thing for me is that there always were people helping me along the way," says Bethany. "My dad, my pastor, and my spark leaders."

As adolescents grow and develop they need to discover their purpose in life and find where they fit into the world. Bethany was no different. Once caring adults offered her experiences, and kindled the spark that was always inside, she went from bad role model to model citizen in no time!

It turns out that helping other people is what sets Bethany on fire! When Bethany heard about the devastating earthquake in Japan, she got a little money from her dad which she used to buy colorful bracelets. Then she sold the bracelets to her friends. The tireless fundraising of a young girl netted \$328 to help earthquake victims.

Bethany hasn't stopped there. She mentors at the local after school program. She visits people in nursing homes. "I want to volunteer at a lot of things," Bethany says. "...the Red Cross and the NAACP...lots of places."



Bethany has two sisters, a brother, three cats and a dog. After high school she sees herself having a career in art therapy where she can combine the two things she loves: art and helping people.

This is the mentor with listening eyes who set fire to the spark inside Bethany.

This is the spark inside Bethany.

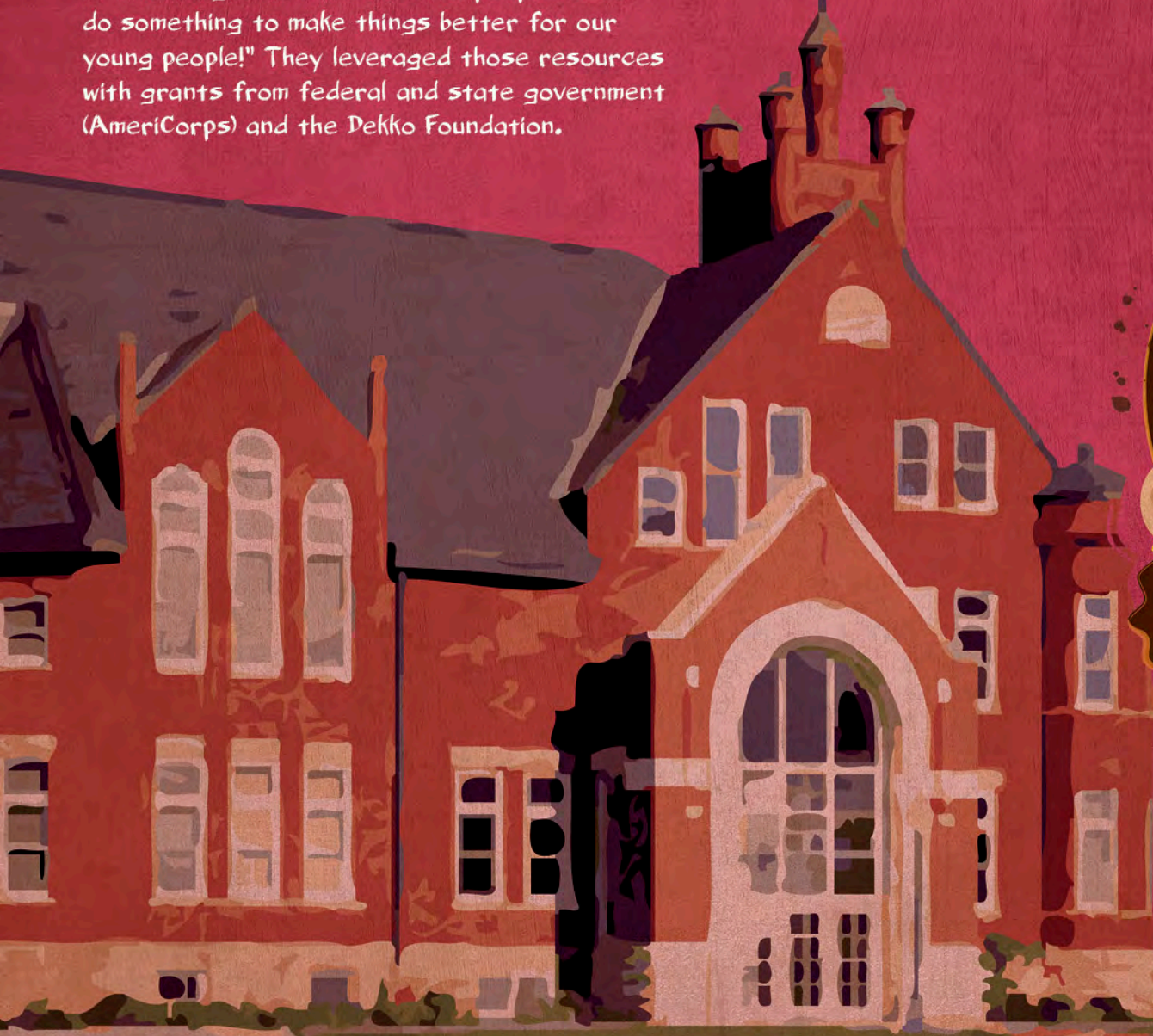
Providing positive adult role models (beyond family members) is one important way to help young people understand how the world works, and begin to discover their place in it.

"I try to help each child find something to be passionate about," says Shannon Harris, a mentor who worked with Bethany. "I tell them that they don't have to be good at this thing... but they should love doing it, and it should make them happy."

"It's exciting to see how Bethany is maturing," Harris said. "She was always a good kid, but somehow she didn't quite fit in...didn't have a niche on her own. The opportunity to serve others has helped Bethany take initiative and be a leader. It has really built her confidence."

This is the program with leaders so wise that hired the mentor with listening eyes that set fire to the spark inside Bethany.

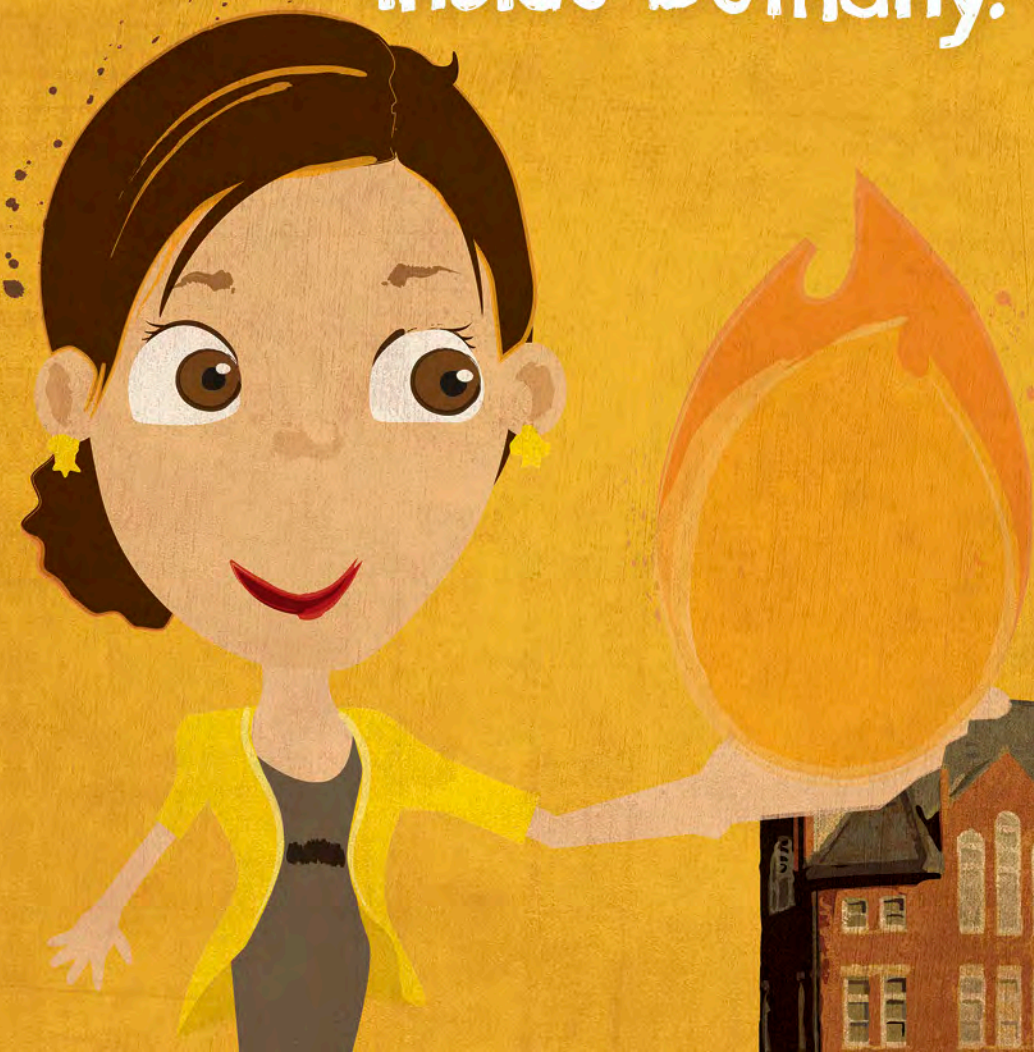
Bethany's mentor was hired by AmeriCorps Youth Launch, an initiative through Graceland University in Lamoni, Iowa. Youth Launch got started when Graceland's leaders looked around themselves and said, "We have buildings. We have a storehouse of knowledge. We have talented people. Let's do something to make things better for our young people!" They leveraged those resources with grants from federal and state government (AmeriCorps) and the Dekko Foundation.



Graceland's goal is to offset the economic, cultural and opportunity poverty that impacts many young people in rural Iowa. Youth Launch works on two fronts, offering opportunities for all young people while targeting those young people with the greatest need for support, hope and inspiration.

These are the grants of
noteworthy size that funded the
program with leaders so wise
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"Youth Launch is a great example of what happens when people and resources work together in all of the right ways," says Tom Leedy, Dekko Foundation president. "Investments by taxpayers and the Dekko Foundation by themselves could not help young people explore their interests and start down a positive path. But, when you combine money with southern Iowa's human resources and Graceland's physical resources, then you have something that not only works, but is also likely to be sustained."



These are the expectations
that focused the grants
of noteworthy size
that funded the program
with leaders so wise
that hired the mentor with
listening eyes that set
fire to the spark inside Bethany.

(the whats?
and
the whys?)



In return for grant investments from AmeriCorps and the Dekko Foundation, Graceland University's leaders have pledged to bring about measurable positive change in the lives of the young people who are most in need. The terms of these grants include commitments about which young people will benefit from Youth Launch and how much their lives will change for the better.



This is the foundation with its
eye on the prize that set the
expectations (the whats? and
the whys?)
that focused the grants



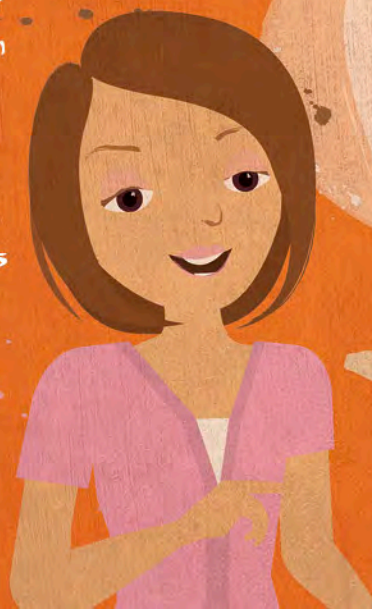
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Visit our website (dekkofoundation.org) then click on the "Present" section of our home page. There you'll be able to read more about our priorities and decide whether or not your work, and ours, aligns.

Our founder had many strong beliefs, including this one: Concentration of effort is the key to human accomplishment. At the Dekko Foundation we take that to heart every day, keeping our eyes glued to priority grant investments that our board believes will take young people on the surest path to economic freedom.



This is the man, no disguise,
who endowed the foundation with
its eye on the prize that set the
(the whats? and the whys?) expectations
of noteworthy size that funded
the program with
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You're at the end of our story which
takes us to Mr. Chester E. Dekko,
whose passion and hard work were
the source of the Dekko Foundation.





Mr. Chester E. Dekko

During 2011 we filmed Mr. Dekko's life story (see it on our website or scan with your smart device) and we feel even more closely connected to him and what he wanted to accomplish through his foundation.



Born in 1926 in Ada, Minnesota, Mr. Dekko was fortunate to have a strong, loving family. The Great Depression made a big impact though, causing him to seek a better life for himself and his family. Mr. Dekko detested the idea of waste and valued the opportunity for economic freedom that this country offered him and others who were willing to work hard and pursue their dreams.

Taking on significant personal risk, Mr. Dekko built a manufacturing business that provided jobs and advancement for thousands of people. In 1981, from the proceeds of that business, he started the Dekko Foundation. When it was time to set the mission of his foundation, Mr. Dekko looked to his own experience. He wanted people to have access to good education that, paired with hard work, would take them on an independent path of their own choice.

Mr. Dekko passed away in 1992, so he never had the pleasure of meeting Bethany. But you can be sure that he'd admire the passion and hard work that the freshman in high school already displays. And he'd be darned proud that his passion and hard work, all those years ago, played a role in lighting her spark!

GEOGRAPHIC AREAS OF INTEREST

We consider grant proposals that will benefit people in the communities where our founder, Mr. Dekko, had an interest during his lifetime.

Those areas are:

Alabama > Limestone County

Indiana > DeKalb, LaGrange, Kosciusko, Noble, Steuben and Whitley Counties

Iowa > Clarke, Decatur, Lucas, Ringgold and Union Counties.

Minnesota > The Community of Ada

HOW TO APPLY

Visit our website www.dekkofoundation.org;
click on the words "How to Apply" on our home page.

PROPOSAL DEADLINES

We do not have grant proposal deadlines.
Instead we ask that you give our board about 90 days to consider and research your proposal.

MISSION

Fostering economic freedom through education.

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