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**COMMUNICATING FOR AMERICA (CA), THE ASHBY EDUCATION FOUNDATION AND ASHBY PUBLIC SCHOOLS ANNOUNCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE JUSTIN WOLDAHL MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP, EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.**

FERGUS FALLS, MN – In January, when Justin Woldahl tragically lost his young life in a snowmobile accident, the entire community of Ashby grieved. Greg Smedsrud, who went to school in Ashby with Justin’s parents, believed that something needed to be done that would honor Justin’s memory and embody Justin’s values and love for his community. “He has been described as a young man who was made to live in Ashby” said Smedrud, who is a managing partner with the CA Education Program, a worldwide training and internship placement program, “His love of sports, the outdoors, and a desire to someday open a business in Ashby.”

Justin’s parents along with Smedsrud, who all attended Ashby High School, contacted the Ashby Education Foundation and proposed a program that would combine scholarships, community development, and enhanced vocational education opportunities for Ashby’s youth. “Small communities in America represent the BEST of America. Justin Woldahl described himself as a young man made for Small Town America,” Smedsrud continued. “It is in his memory that we hope to build the pathways for young people to see opportunities in towns like Ashby, and to build their futures in the best that America has to offer.”

The Ashby Education Foundation agreed that the proposal would not only honor a remarkable young man, but would also benefit the entire Ashby community. “This is an exciting opportunity to assist not only our graduating students, but our community as well. I see this as a great way to encourage students to pursue a certification or degree, and then bring that knowledge and skill back to Ashby,” said Suzanne Wing, a member of the Ashby Education Foundation.

The program will consist of three main components. The first would provide an annual memorial scholarship to a young Ashby Arrow to attend a vocational or technical program who exemplifies Justin’s qualities and desire to live and open a business in Ashby. The program hopes to develop an endowment that would award grants to scholarship recipients to start a business in Ashby. Secondly, the program will work with West Central Initiative and other area non-profit organizations to identify grant,

loan, business mentoring, and tax incentives for new businesses and then work with young entrepreneurs to utilize these programs. The third component will identify and help fund needed vocational programs in the Ashby school system that will provide young people the skills required to succeed in their post-secondary training.

“This program is a critical step in demonstrating there are ways to reverse the trend of our graduates leaving and not returning because of a lack of employment opportunities in small, rural towns,” said Ashby Principal Tom Otte. “This program will give Ashby students an incentive to strive for excellence, particularly in the trades arena, and it may give the Ashby School a springboard to improve some infrastructure in our Agriculture/trades department.”

Communicating for America is a 38-year-old non-partisan and non-profit national association made up of farmers and small businesses all across rural America. For more information on CA, visit their web site at [www.communicatingforamerica.org](http://www.communicatingforamerica.org).

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