



# 25 Years

## OF CHANGING LIVES



**BISON**  
CHILDREN'S SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Giving parents a choice. Giving children a chance.





## We Are Celebrating - 25 Years!

### A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Birthdays and anniversaries are times to reflect: they are bridges from one year to another, from childhood to adulthood, from one station of life to another. They mark a point in time for us to celebrate what we have accomplished, take stock in what we have learned, and plan for the future.

As we celebrate our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we are reflecting on the incredible impact we have had on our community while continuing to challenge ourselves on how best to expand and enhance our program.

Twenty-five years ago, our founders, Paul Bauer, Tom Beecher, and Chris Jacobs, had the vision that families should be able to choose the school that best fits their child's needs regardless of their income or zip code.

**33,300**  
SCHOLARSHIPS HAVE  
BEEN AWARDED.

That first year, BISON offered 200 scholarships to families residing in the City of Buffalo. This year, BISON is serving 1,900 K-12 scholars across the eight counties of WNY. Throughout our 25-year history, BISON has awarded over 33,300 scholarships worth a private investment of \$32 million.

BISON is successful because it provides a hand up not a handout. All our families are required to pay a portion of tuition. They struggle, but are willing to sacrifice for their child's education, knowing that a quality education opens the door to more opportunities and a better tomorrow.

This formula works. Our 8<sup>th</sup> grade scholars graduate from high school and enroll in college at significantly higher percentages than their peers who enrolled in a "one size fits all" system. Beyond statistics, our scholars flourish and strive to be the best versions of themselves and positive contributors to society which is living proof of our founders' vision.

BISON scholarships are symbols of the ripple effect that we can have on a student, a family, a school, and a community. Our families and schools strengthen communities, showing us that the cycle of poverty can be disrupted with a healthy educational system.

As we look to the future, we challenge ourselves to serve even more children who want a private school education but can't afford it. BISON is incredibly grateful for the role our donors and supporters play in continuing the work our founders began. We look forward to our next 25 years. Onward.

Amy E. Popadick  
Executive Director

## WHY BISON?

Your dollars go further with BISON

Through BISON's partnership with the Children's Scholarship Fund in New York, donations received can be matched. Your gift is matched, first by CSF, then by the scholarship families, highly leveraging your investment.

### OUR IMPACT 2019-2020 SCHOOL YEAR



**1,800**  
K-8 STUDENTS



**97**  
HIGH SCHOOL  
STUDENTS



**85**  
K-12 PARTNER  
SCHOOLS

**100%**  
OF OUR FAMILIES  
ARE CLASSIFIED  
AS LOW INCOME

AVERAGE  
BISON FAMILY  
OF 4 INCOME  
**\$35,886**



**SEVEN YEARS IN A ROW!**

4 out of 4 Star Rating from  
CHARITY NAVIGATOR

Less than 6% of U.S. charities  
achieve this rating.

### SUCCESS BEYOND 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE

**\$455,200**

in Scholarship money to private  
high schools from our 175  
BISON 8<sup>th</sup> graders in 2019

**97%**

of 2015 BISON  
Scholars graduated  
on time from **high  
school** in 2019

**91%**

of BISON Fund  
alumni go on  
to **college**





We have come a long way in 25 years! A simple idea of helping families choose their own path has grown into opportunity for thousands. BISON provides the bridge families need to take their children from a life of poverty into a life of self-sufficiency as contributing members of our society.

## THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF EDUCATION



COMMUNITY



SCHOOL

FAMILY



STUDENT



## STUDENT IMPACT

**Michele** GRADE 5

"I am so proud of how hard Michele has works in school. Her hard work is paying off and she is excelling. Her favorite subject is English because she loves to read. She is receiving a great education, and this wouldnt' be possible without her BISON Scholarship. We are so grateful." - MICHELE'S MOM



## FAMILY IMPACT

**Ngwane** KINDERGARTEN

"Ngwane was shy in Pre-K and had a hard time keeping up with what was being taught. Being at Notre Dame has changed that. She is participating and the teachers are a great support to her. It wouldn't be possible without BISON. Thank you for helping me be at ease knowing that my little girl won't be "lost" at school." - NGWANE'S DAD



## SCHOOL IMPACT

**Catholic Academy of West Buffalo**

"Being a BISON Fund school since the beginning has been a tremendous gift to our families and to the school. In 25 years, we have received more than \$2 million from BISON, allowing us to maintain enrollment. We are a most grateful school community and so proud to partner with BISON."



## COMMUNITY IMPACT

**John R. Oishei Foundation**

In order to fulfill our mission of enhancing economic vitality and quality of life in the Buffalo Niagara region, The Oishei Foundation's most significant focus is on education and in supporting organizations that help students thrive. The Bison Children's Scholarship Fund does just that by providing opportunities for elementary students to attend private schools that may not otherwise be attainable for them and their families. By broadening educational opportunities in our community, families are empowered to find the best fit for their child, leading to greater success in school and in life.



# Over 33,300 Scholarships!



In our 25 year history, and through the continued generosity of community supporters like you, we have awarded 33,300 scholarships worth a private investment of \$32 million.

## Family Spotlight: The Christian Family

NARDIN ACADEMY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The story of the Christian Family is not unlike so many BISON families. Evans and Melissa Christian realized that their academically talented children were not being challenged in their current academic environment. They wanted more for them. Knowing that they needed assistance to be able to send their children to their "dream school of choice", they turned to the BISON Fund.

The BISON Fund has enabled their three children, Colton (grade 10), Camden (grade 8) and Cadence (grade 5), to attend a school that not only challenges them academically but promotes healthy social and spiritual growth. It has provided opportunities to them that would not have been available at other schools.

**"It is the BISON Fund that has changed the trajectory of our kids' lives."** - MELISSA

Colton, a BISON alum, is now a sophomore and is excelling both academically and athletically at Nichols School. He aspires to become a mechanical engineer.

Camden is heavily involved with the robotics program, athletics and student council. He has started to think about high school and is looking forward to following in his brother's footsteps and attend a top high school in WNY.

Cadence, the known hardest worker of the family, enjoys her school and all that it encompasses. She participates in gymnastics and aspires to excel in elementary school, high school and go on to attend college.

**"Being selected for the BISON Fund motivated us to apply to a top-rated elementary school, which seemed to be the best school to challenge our children academically. When it worked out that they were able to attend because of BISON, we were blown away. It has been such a gift and they are making the most out of their private school education."** - EVANS



## Teagan & TJ

ST. AMELIA SCHOOL, GRADE 2

Teagan and TJ love second grade. Teagan's favorite class is reading and TJ's favorite class is math. They help each other with homework every night. Their mom says "After losing their father right before they were about to start kindergarten, we turned to the BISON Fund for help. They made it possible for me to still afford the kind of education we wanted for them."

## Grace

CATHOLIC ACADEMY OF WEST BUFFALO, GRADE 3

Grace considers her school her second family. She always raises her hand to help a teacher or fellow student. She wants to be a teacher when she grows up. Her family is grateful for the opportunity to have Grace in a small and nurturing environment, knowing that she will gain confidence and reach her full potential.



## Ava

BUFFALO SEMINARY, FRESHMAN

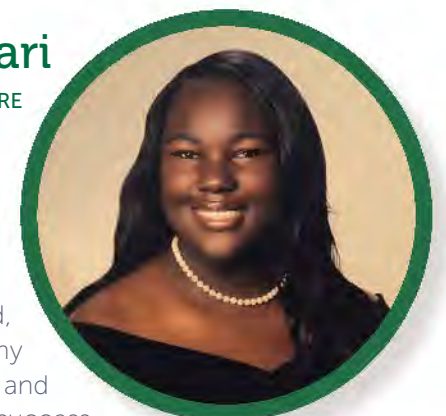
Ava is at Buffalo Seminary with the help of a BISON high school scholarship. She graduated from St. Mark School where her five brothers still attend. She loves the all-girl environment at Sem and meeting new friends. Her favorite subjects are science and English. Outside of school she participates in the Cornell Cooperative program and wants to become a veterinarian. Her parents are so proud of the young lady Ava is becoming.



## SaMari

CORNELL UNIVERSITY, SOPHOMORE

"I was always a persistent and enthusiastic student in the classroom. My mother saw that and was determined to give me the best education available. She enrolled me at St. Joseph's University School for kindergarten, and I loved it. Tuition became a hardship in 6<sup>th</sup> grade as she was a widow raising four girls on her own. With the help of the BISON Fund, I completed my journey. I went on to Sacred Heart Academy and now Cornell University. I am a biological sciences major and plan to be an OB-GYN. The BISON Fund is a big part of my success, and without it, I can honestly say I wouldn't be where I am today."



# Helping Children with Dreams

# Become Students with Vision



# Celebrating Milestones

MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN, PAUL D. BAUER

To our Friends of the BISON Fund,

Twenty-five years ago the founders of the BISON Fund never envisioned what would transpire in the years ahead: awarding over 33,000 scholarships, increasing from 200 to 1,900 scholarships per year, increasing the average award from \$500 to \$1,400 per scholar, or initiating a high school award for our scholars. Yet, even with all of these accomplishments, we still have a wait-list of nearly 1,000 students!

The original vision is still the same - Give Families a Choice and Children a Chance. Elsewhere in this report are statistics on how well these children perform.

The original concept is the same too - BISON is a secular organization, with no religious affiliation. Award winners, who are all economically disadvantaged, can attend any school of their choice, encompassing secular and non-secular schools. In several schools, BISON scholars account for more than 50% of the students.

Three elements are necessary to make BISON work:

- Academically competent private K-12 schools
- Dedicated donors (you!!!)
- Eligible families who are willing to pay a minimum tuition cost. This is a very large sacrifice for low income families who know that education is the best way to beat the cycle of poverty.

The families are the true heroes of the BISON Fund; as donors, we are the facilitators.

The academic results for the children receiving awards is the impetus we need to keep driving forward. Please stay with us in helping so many children have a chance to profoundly change their lives.

Thank you,



Paul D. Bauer  
Board President

## YOUR DOLLARS AT WORK

FISCAL YEAR EXPENSES

**\$2,929,162**

K-12 SCHOLARSHIP  
**\$2,681,692** (91.6%)

K-12 PROGRAM ADMIN  
**\$91,701** (3.1%)

FISCAL YEAR  
ENDING JUNE 2019

FUNDRAISING  
**\$155,769** (5.3%)



## Maritza & Jack Ruh

There is no shortage of philanthropic opportunities, locally, nationally or globally. Each of us make a choice to support causes based on what speaks to our hearts. I choose to support the BISON Fund because when I look into the eyes of these young students, I see a younger version of myself.

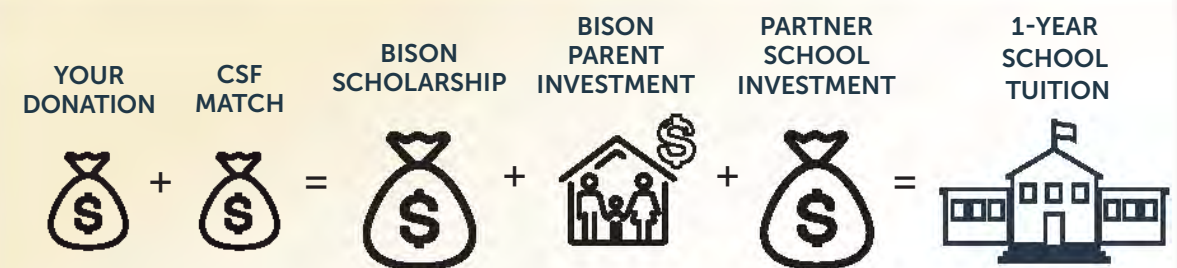
I am the product of immigrant parents who both escaped communist countries to pursue the American Dream. Alone, penniless and unable to speak English, my parents relied on the generosity of Catholic Charities and others for help to get on their feet. As a child I could have easily been a BISON Fund recipient had it existed then. Intuitively, I understand the BISON Fund's model. It works because it partners with families who are willing to sacrifice to provide a better future for their children. The BISON Fund works alongside families and shares in the journey from K - 12. Parents feel financially supported while each student gains confidence and is empowered to make a difference in their own life. This holistic approach is the foundation of the Fund's measurable and impressive success over the past 25 years.

The vision of the BISON Fund founders has attracted many talented and giving leaders in the community. My husband Jack and I are proud to be associated with the BISON Fund Leadership. We are proud to stand with private donors and collaborating schools who believe choice in education gives economically disadvantaged students access to a better life. These benefits spill over into the community at large, ultimately boosting economic growth. It's a win-win for all involved.

I know I speak for every supporter in wishing the BISON Fund continued success as it profoundly impacts future generations, one student at a time.

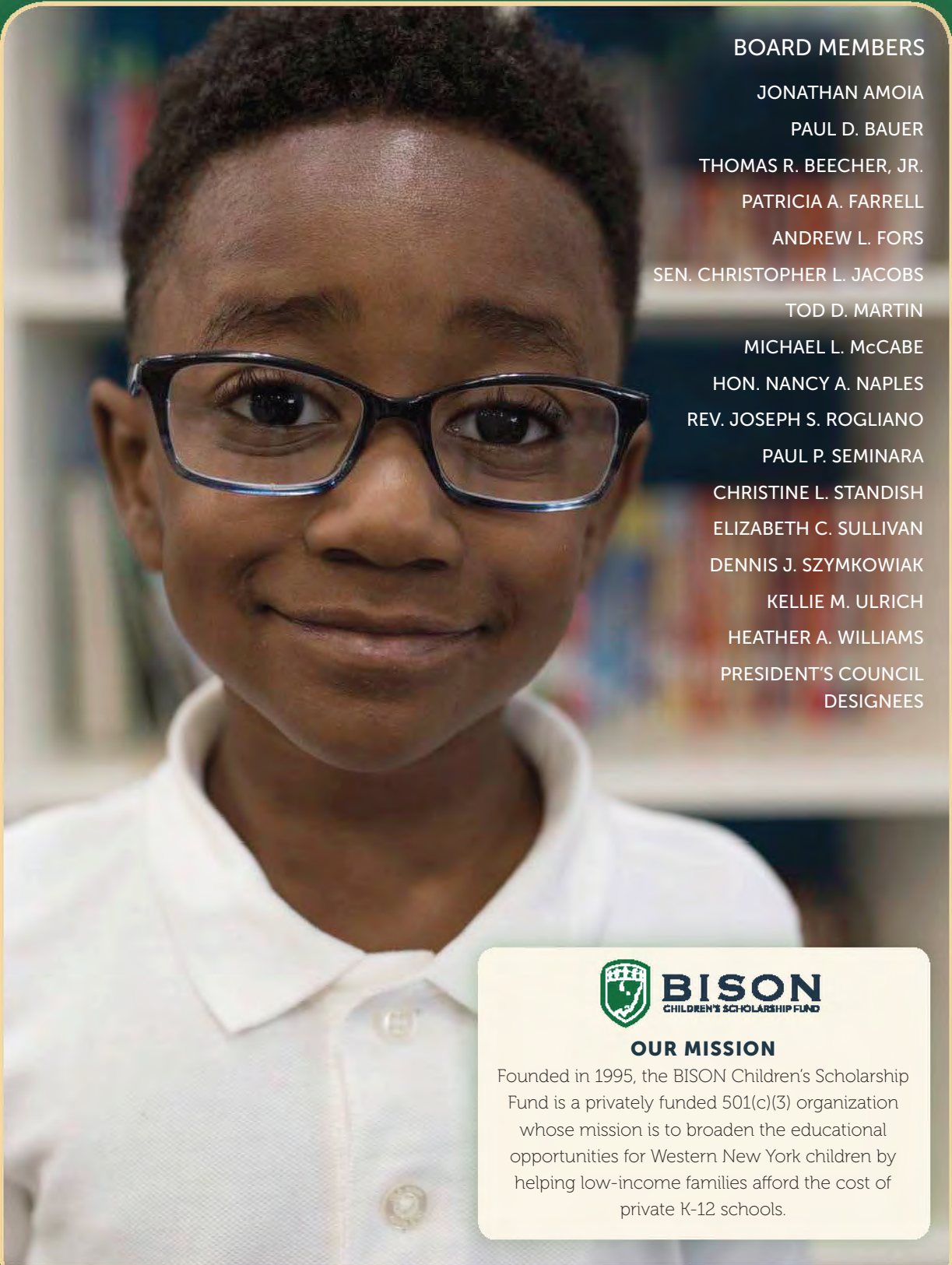
Thank you, BISON Fund, for the opportunity to pay it forward.

## HOW YOUR GIFT IS LEVERAGED



Your donation is leveraged by a 25% match by Children's Scholarship Fund of NYC.

BISON parents always pay a portion of their child's tuition, giving them a financial stake in their child's education and leveraging your gift even further.



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**BISON**  
CHILDREN'S SCHOLARSHIP FUND

**OUR MISSION**

Founded in 1995, the BISON Children's Scholarship Fund is a privately funded 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to broaden the educational opportunities for Western New York children by helping low-income families afford the cost of private K-12 schools.

**STAFF**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
Amy E. Popadick

PROGRAM DIRECTOR  
Cynthia L. McDonald

ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR  
Jean A. Lorigo

**CONTACT INFO**

284 Delaware Avenue | Buffalo, NY 14202 | 716.854.0869 | [www.bisonfund.com](http://www.bisonfund.com)

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