Teaming for a Brighter Tomorrow initiative publicly launches at New Holstein-Kiel Varsity Football game

$210,000 pledged to date

For Immediate Release

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(Kiel, WI – New Holstein, WI) At halftime of the New Holstein and Kiel varsity football game tonight, a new initiative was publicly announced with a vision of ensuring all youth in the two communities are successful in school and in life. **Teaming for a Brighter Tomorrow** is bringing together Kiel and New Holstein businesses, community members, local governments and school districts to provide support for a comprehensive network of programs; programs already in place but without adequate funding.

The effort was the idea of Mike VanderZanden, CEO and President of Amerequip®, a Kiel, Wisconsin based designer and manufacturer of custom equipment for the lawn, landscape, agricultural and construction markets. Amerequip has facilities in both Kiel and New Holstein. “Youth today, and their families, face so many challenges,” he said. “And, as we all know, funding is challenging for programs that aren’t directly tied to classroom education. But many of these programs are essential to a student’s success, so I thought there was something we as a community could do about it, which is why we developed the initiative and called it Teaming for a Brighter Tomorrow.”

It began by working with representatives from the Kiel and New Holstein school districts, who quickly identified three focus areas where support is needed from a financial as well as volunteer perspective. “They are program areas that both districts have in common: safe decision making programs, community programs and mentoring programs,” explained VanderZanden. “And they are areas where funding is always challenging and tends to be done in a piecemeal fashion, which isn’t ideal on a year to year basis.” The core committee was comprised of Casey Mertens, Tanya Fenner, and Doug Olig from New Holstein Schools; Heidi Dorner, Katie Thibeault and Dawn Mueller of Kiel Schools and Pamela Krueger from Aurora Health Care.

A fundraising effort was then launched. “I began approaching some of the larger employers in both communities as well as local government entities,” VanderZanden said. “After all, what happens to students has a direct impact, not just on the students and their families, but to us as a community and as employers. It wasn’t a hard sell.”

The goal is to raise $50-thousand a year for three years for each school district ($150,000 total per school district), with the money being used for targeted programs that fall into the three focus areas.

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“That will ensure the programs are carried out the way they should be and it will help get these programs on the road to sustainability,” added VanderZanden. “With today’s public announcement, we are asking other businesses, organizations and the community to join us to help fully fund the effort.”

To date, $210,000 has been pledged (in total, with pledges spanning over the next three years). Ceremonial checks for $105,000 were presented to each school district during halftime of the Kiel-New Holstein football game. Lead donors include:

- Amerequip
- HG Weber
- Land O’Lakes
- MB Company
- Metko
- Shopko
- Weber Oil
- Windwalker Label

“It truly does take the effort of a community to care for our students, and that’s why an initiative like Teaming for a Brighter Tomorrow is so important,” said Kiel Administrator Dr. Louise Blankenheim. “In Kiel, monies raised will help with a wide variety of programs, such as the Tribes program where we are training students, teachers, counselors and administrators in the process of creating a Tribes Learning Community. As part of it, we have upperclassmen working with freshmen groups to begin implementing the ideas of inclusion, influence and community. I would like to thank Mike and all of the businesses and community members who are stepping forward to help with this effort.”

New Holstein Administrator Dan Nett said, “This is an outstanding example of the community coming together for the greater good. An example of a New Holstein program that will be helped by the initiative is the Family Assistance Program, which provides pathways for help to students and families who are in crisis or have specific needs not addressed elsewhere. The program will be offered to all families, regardless of income or insurance. We are grateful that there is strong community and business interest and support in programs like this and the others that the initiative will help support.”

The mayors of both cities also praised the effort. “Mike VanderZanden’s leadership at Amerequip has been outstanding, not just for his company, its associates and customers, but for the community as a whole,” said Kiel Mayor Michael Steinhardt. “This is another example of how he sees a need and does something about it.” New Holstein Mayor, Dianne Reese, said, “This effort will help ensure that valuable programs in our schools and for our families are able to have the funds and volunteers needed to operate at an effective level. I thank Mike for his vision in putting this together, to the companies who have contributed, and to those who are working hard to make the effort an even bigger success.”

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Those interested in supporting the effort can contact:

**New Holstein businesses, organizations and residents:**
New Holstein Schools District Office
920-898-5115
dnett@nhsd.k12.wi.us

**Kiel businesses, organizations and residents:**
Kiel Schools District Office
Dr. Louise Blankenheim
lblankenheim@kiel.k12.wi.us
920-894-2266

VanderZanden says he is encouraging other businesses, organizations, government entities and community members to step forward with support in the days to come. “We aren’t at our goal yet, but we are confident that other businesses, organizations and community members will help because, like all of us, they also care about our youth and want to give them every chance to grow and succeed. A collaborative effort like Teaming for a Brighter Tomorrow can help make that happen.”

### Media Notes:
- **New Holstein Public School District** includes three public schools, serving more than 1,000 students. To learn more, go to: www.nhsd.k12.wi.us
- The **Kiel Area Public School District** includes four public schools, serving approximately 1500 students. To learn more, go to: www.kiel.k12.wi.us
- For more information about **Amerequip®** go to: www.Amerequip.com

**Media contact:**
Susan Finco
Leonard & Finco Public Relations, Inc.
920-965-7750 ext. 158
sfinco@LFpublicrelations.com