



IGNITING THE SPARK:

Examples of Next Gen Engagement Strategies

THE MONIKER FOUNDATION

LOCATED: Colorado Springs, Colorado
with the family geographically
dispersed across Colorado

WEBSITE: www.monikerfoundation.org

MISSION STATEMENT: Providing
resources for education and well-being
to Colorado communities

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The Moniker Foundation

Who Is Involved:

- Youth ages 6–25
- 13 youth family members currently involved across the 3rd and 4th generations
- Supported by a family member in the role of Executive Director

History of Youth Engagement:

Three years ago, our family foundation came to a dramatic juncture in our organizational lifecycle and purpose. At the time, Moniker Foundation was simple. It provided scholarships to disadvantaged students and grants to organizations close to the Board's heart. Knowing this philanthropic purpose, the Board set out to learn what else they could do to make a difference in the community.



We embarked down the road of strategic planning. Mission, vision, and desired impact were mapped, analyzed, and evaluated. The most important question we had to answer was, “Should Moniker last in perpetuity or should we sunset?”

Moniker was slated for perpetuity. With this new strategy in place, we needed to determine how to accomplish our goals? Two paths formed—work from within the family or hire externally. The Board used Moniker as the glue to hold the family together and carry on the family legacy, so we assembled an internal, family-forward, framework.



I am the first paid staff and the first member of the third generation to be involved at a higher level. I was tasked with realizing the Board’s vision of the next generation, and greater family involvement.

Our framework satisfies two purposes—intentionality and flexibility. We are concrete and thoughtful in our Scholarship Program and Competitive Grants Program, yet flexible in our Family Giving Program.

I’d like to reflect on our Family Giving Program and, particularly, on our [Philanthropy for all Ages Program](#). It is a tiered approach for ages 6 to 18+. The Philanthropy for All Ages Program is designed to generate next-gen interest in the family foundation.

Current Youth Engagement Strategies:

Ages 6 -10: Feed the Piggy — Save, Grow, Give

Children receive a Moniker piggy bank along with our coloring storybook about philanthropy, [The Daring Duo: A Story of Two True Super Heroes](#). Children are encouraged to engage with the story and color the pictures. For every \$1 saved, Moniker matches \$10, up to \$500. At the end of the year, each child chooses where they would like to give the money.

This is by far my favorite Moniker program. It’s heart-warming and inspiring. Too often, adults discount the thoughts and opinions of children, but I have learned that children are smart, observant, and caring. On the flip side, the book is also a building block for the parents to communicate their own values with their children.

My nephew, Wyatt, decided to donate his first piggy bank to homeless children. We took Wyatt, with his bag full of coins, to visit Urban Peak—an organization serving homeless youth. Wyatt received a tour of the shelter where children sleep and eat. He learned about the chores that they complete for points that can be exchanged for various things during their stay. On the ride home, Wyatt pointed to people on the street asking if they were homeless youth. Every time I see him, he asks when he can go visit again. It melts my heart.



Right: Heather, age 8, donated her first savings to the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo.



ADVICE TO OTHERS:

- **Find the age that best fits your family** – Originally, the program was slated for ages 5 to 10, but we moved the starting age up to 6. At six, many children are entering, or are already enrolled in, kindergarten and are beginning to interact with the world around them.
- **Find the right time** – We have a large, diverse, and dispersed family and, as such, it is often hard to maintain constant contact. To bring all of us together, I take advantage of the summer, when kids are out of school.
- **Use a creative tool** – The piggy bank and book are tools for parents to explore philanthropy with their children. The book provides a creative language for parents to start the conversation. It also connects the children to their peers.
- **Rewards are good** – We count the money together as another fun learning activity. Then, I reward the children with stickers so they can decorate their piggy bank.
- **Let their passions shine** – We allow the selection of organizations to reflect each child's passion. Allowing them to be creative in their giving fulfills our internal mission.

Ages 10–15: Helping Hands

Children engage in service-oriented projects. Upon completion of the project, Moniker provides a \$500 grant to the organization.

This program focuses on the second “t” in the tried and true philanthropy philosophy—time, talent, and treasures. At this age, children are beginning to understand their place in the world and how they can contribute to it.

My cousin Liza lives in a small, rural community in Colorado. Not shy about helping others, Liza volunteered her time with Kids Pasta Project—an organization that prepares and sells freshly-made, healthy meals and donates the proceeds to local causes. Liza reflected on her experience by sharing, “The program gives us a way to serve our communities and further learn skills like cooking, serving, and hosting. When you get older you get to be a leader by helping each of the younger kids.”

ADVICE TO OTHERS:

- **Find out what they are good at** – Start the conversation with what they like to do and what talents they can share.
- **Speak to their level** – Be prepared to suggest focus areas to help find the right volunteer experience.
- **Tailor the experience to the kid** – Focus on the quality of the experience, don't concern yourself with the amount of time spent.



Ages 10–18: Juniors

Juniors is our junior board program. Here family members learn the components of grant-making by reading and reviewing grant proposals, attending site visits, and presenting funding recommendations to the Board of Directors. Juniors are allocated \$5,000 to disburse to a set of proposed organizations. This selection occurs once per year at our family reunion.

The lessons, skills, and values taught in the earlier years are meant to come full circle through this program. It also acts as the gathering place for the age groups. 10-year-olds add as much value to the conversation around impact as the older kids. The older kids also have the opportunity to showcase their leadership styles.

Rachel, an older member of Juniors, reflected, “Juniors is a great program because it allows for some of the older cousins to get together to share our passions and ideas about philanthropy. We always enjoy our meetings and feel that we pick a great nonprofit to support at the end of the day!”

ADVICE TO OTHERS:

- **Find a time that best fits your family** – Our program occurs in the summer to accommodate schedules. We also coordinate the program with our family reunion to allow other family members to attend and participate.
- **Listen to and incorporate their ideas** – Before the Juniors read the applications, I invite them to take a survey to gauge their interests and where they think the need is most in their communities. This helps them feel connected to the decision making process.
- **Help them feel a part of something bigger** – The Juniors present their final selection to the Board at our annual meeting.

Ages 18+: Familyship

Family members are eligible for a Board seat and/or a time-designated internship.

Now that a family member is all grown up, they’re ready to take on a real job in the world of philanthropy! From managing data, to researching feasible programming, the Familyship is built around the foundation’s workflows, family members’ passions, and their allotted time commitment.

A few family members have completed this intensive program with Moniker. Not only is it a resume-building opportunity for family members, but it is a great leadership opportunity for our staff. Being a small-staffed foundation, we can often get in the mindset of one-man is best. Bringing other people to the table is refreshing, yet at times very challenging, which keeps everyone on their toes!

ADVICE TO OTHERS:

- **Be flexible yet concrete** – College students have busy lives. It is good to give them structure, while also creating a safe space to problem solve logistical pieces like scheduling, emails, and video calls.
- **Be a boss first and a friend second** – It’s not always easy to tell a family member when they have dropped the ball, but mistakes are learning opportunities.

Resources to Share Upon Request:

- Next Gen Activities – Our youth philanthropy book, [*The Daring Duo: A Story of Two True Super Heroes*](#)
- Helping Hands – Volunteer activity worksheet
- Juniors – Survey structure, application, and reviewing worksheet