

# GEO Member Spotlight



*How the small Siebert Lutheran Foundation is being a catalyst, collaborator, facilitator and capacity builder*

With a staff of only three and a specific focus on funding organizations identified with the Lutheran faith, the Siebert Lutheran Foundation is anything but a foundation with a limited vision.

One of the most obvious indications of the Wisconsin foundation's emphasis on maximizing its impact comes in the four roles that it publically emphasizes: Capacity Builder, Catalyst, Collaborator and Facilitator.

Ron Jones, president of the Siebert Lutheran Foundation, shared that the foundation emphasizes providing more than financial resources to grantees. After grantees meet with the foundation, they often leave with new ideas, new connections to other funders and new relationships with others working on similar issues.

As an example, Jones shared about the "Change or Die" conference that the foundation is holding this year and has held for the last three years. During the conference, the Siebert Lutheran Foundation invites pioneering Lutheran leaders from across the country to come and share their successful, innovative practices with the assembled leaders from Wisconsin.

Working as a funder of religious organizations can require tact, specifically when playing the collaborator or facilitator role. During the "Change or Die" conference and other foundation efforts, Jones said he's seen the foundation play a key role in navigating and collaborating across denominational divides that often prove to be barriers for learning and sharing efforts.

"I've had pastors who have called me to say, 'Ron, if it wasn't for the Siebert Lutheran Foundation, I wouldn't have even known the other pastor five blocks down the street because he's from a different church body,'" Jones said "And now the two pastors are meeting once a month to have coffee together and learn about what's going on at both churches." The pastors have also collaborated with the parish nurse at the one church who has a great deal of advice on how to develop programs in the other church.



Ron Jones, President, Siebert Lutheran Foundation

*Two additional examples of the Siebert Lutheran Foundation's work: Serenity Inns and Pilgrim Lutheran School*

**Program Replication:** The Siebert Lutheran Foundation played a crucial role in developing **Serenity Inns**, a transitional living program for homeless men in Milwaukee. The program is modeled after Samaritan Inns in Washington, D.C. and involved bringing individuals from Samaritan Inns to Milwaukee to establish the new organization. The Siebert Lutheran Foundation has divided its funding for Serenity Inns into two separate grants, one for general operating support and the other as a matching grant for funding from the community, which has led to greater investment in strengthening organizational capacity for Serenity Inns.

**Collaborative Co-Funding:** Jones was approached by LUMIN — a network of Lutheran schools in the Milwaukee area — to renovate a closed school building and reopen it as a new school. Although LUMIN initially requested that the foundation grant cover 100 percent of the renovation costs, the Siebert Foundation facilitated a collaboration that brought in funding from the Walton Family Foundation and the Lutheran Church Extension Fund for a more sustainable development process. **Pilgrim Lutheran School** opened its doors for the 2012 – 2013 school year to serve kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade students, with plans to expand by one consecutive grade over the next three years.

Jones said examples like this one demonstrate why an emphasis on being a catalyst, collaborator, facilitator and capacity builder are so crucial to the foundation’s work.

Grantee collaboration isn’t the only type of collaboration that the Siebert Lutheran Foundation is experienced with. Jones shared about how he has used GEO’s GEOList email listserv to glean helpful practices from other members in the GEO community. He specifically referenced a 2012 post titled “Dashboards.”\*

From the email exchange that took place, Jones read about the New York State Health Foundation’s [organizational scorecard](#). Inspired by the NYS Health Foundation, he developed the Siebert Lutheran Foundation’s Grant Making Effectiveness Report, a single-page report to measure a grant impact using information placed under the following indicators: “What are we doing,” “How we measure progress,” “Where we started,” “Where we have been,” “Where we are now,” and “What this means.”

Jones said that the brief report is useful both to the foundation’s board of trustees and to grantees. In addition to allowing the foundation to have conversations with grantees about measurable progress, it has led to important learning opportunities, including identifying how to be more strategic and what the grantees’ needs are.

“We are a funder, and we like to see grantees reach their goals,” Jones said. “I think it’s helping both sides.”

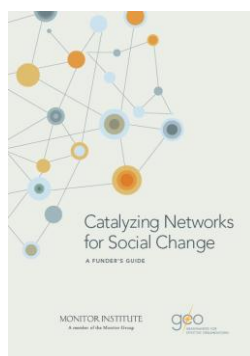
*\*This and other GEOList posts are available to GEO members by [clicking here](#).*

### About the Siebert Lutheran Foundation

Founded in 1952 by Albert F. Siebert, owner of the Milwaukee Electric Tool Company, the [Siebert Lutheran](#) Foundation was established to fund Christian ministries identified with the Lutheran faith. The foundation works specifically in Southeastern Wisconsin within three areas of focus: “Sharing the Gospel through Lutheran Churches and Organizations,” “Breaking the Poverty Cycle through Faith-Based Education” and “Supporting Bible-Based Human Services.”

### GEO resources that relate to the topics covered in this member spotlight:

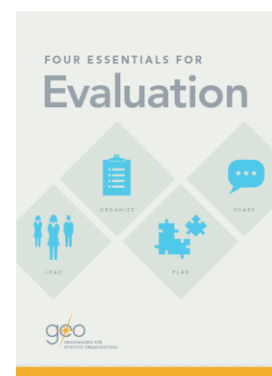
*Catalyzing Networks for Social Change*



*Strategic Co-Funding: An Approach for Expanded Impact*



*Four Essentials for Evaluation*



Find these and other resources for grantmakers at [www.geofunders.org](http://www.geofunders.org)