

## COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

# 'Littlest philanthropist' makes cookie charity official



Mariana Ausmus, 9, proves that serious pursuits don't come with age limits. With the help of her father, Ryan, and alongside her little sister, Ana Carolina, she became the youngest foundation director associated with the Community Foundation of Southwest Kansas with the creation of "Mariana's Cookies for Help." CHRISTOPHER GUINN/DODGE CITY DAILY GLOBE

## Mariana Ausmus becomes director of 'Mariana's Cookies for Help'

By Christopher Guinn  
Dodge City Daily Globe

Mariana Ausmus at the age of 9 has become the youngest director of a charitable foundation assisted by the Community Foundation of Southwest

Kansas.

When the fundraising accomplishments of the Northwest Elementary fourth-grader moved beyond the realm of one-time bake sale, her father, Ryan Ausmus, figured it was time to make her philanthropic efforts

more formal and asked the Community Foundation for help.

It's not often you hear 9-year-olds talk about philanthropic foundations, Community Foundation Executive

SEE COOKIES, A3



Pat Hamit with the Community Foundation of Southwest Kansas, left, and dad, Ryan Ausmus, take Mariana Ausmus through the paperwork establishing her charitable foundation. For Mariana's Cookies for Help, the Community Foundation will waive its typical 1 percent management fee. CHRISTOPHER GUINN/DODGE CITY DAILY GLOBE

## COOKIES

From Page A1

Director Pat Hamit said. "I call her our littlest philanthropist. That's why the Community Foundation exists, to help ordinary people achieve their goals," Hamit said. The Community Foundation acts as an umbrella for several other funds under its non-profit, tax-exempt status, freeing the "doers" from the financial and organization headaches of corporate filings.

"We're just anxious to see what she does and how she does it and how far this goes," Hamit said.

Ryan said he was speaking on community involvement when Mariana told him that she wanted to do the things he was talking about.

"We are already involved in that," Ryan told his daughter.

"No we, me!" Ryan said she replied. She wanted to help children who were less fortunate.

"She said 'I want to start a foundation to help kids,'" Ryan said.

"My dad knows a lot of foundations like UMMAM, so I wanted my own foundation," Mariana said. Her first independent project was raising money for a family

that needed assistance by selling cookies and donating the money to United Methodist Mexican-American Ministries. She has also raised money for the Dodge City Credit Union Coats for Kids program.

She and her father signed the papers to organize under the Community Foundation, Tuesday.

The foundation is set up as an "advised pass-through fund," meaning the money collected can be used with the approval of the Community Foundation's governing board — mostly a technical requirement. "If the fund gets big enough, we can start talking about endowments."

The new foundation is part of a family tradition. Ryan is deeply involved in the community as a pastor, a school board member, a Big Brother and an executive at the college. Mariana's grandmother, Gayle Ausmus, is the director of the Dodge City United Way.

Ryan said his first taste of community involvement was with the Big Brothers Big Sisters program. "My love for community really grew from that," he said. "I wanted to give back and help any way I could."

As a lifelong Dodge Citian, he wanted to instill a desire to see improvement in the community in his children.

"I'm lucky is stuck," he said.

He said his daughter's first big success in philanthropic organizing was when she gave a presentation on community involvement to her third grade class last year, inspiring the kids to take on a car wash and raised "several hundred" dollars for Manna House.

Mariana is the oldest at 9 and was joined by her little sister, Ana Carolina, at the Community Foundation. The two sisters also have a younger brother, who is 2.

"She's a good helper too, she's got a good heart," Ryan said of his youngest daughter.

In the short term, Mariana's Cookies for Help will continue selling homemade dishes, though they will likely expand away from cookies and baked treats — maybe enchiladas, next — but as she grows older and matures, so will the foundation that may become her life's calling, and its efforts.

Soon after signing the documents, Mariana's new foundation raised \$335 in donations from the guests assembled to see the littlest philanthropist make her foundation official.

Mariana hopes people will learn the same lesson she has learned, "that helping is really good because there's people that really need."