



DULUTH SUPERIOR AREA
**COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION**

Private giving for the public good.

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Floerke named president and CEO

After 16 years on bench, judge ‘energized’ to lead Community Foundation

DULUTH—Shaun Floerke, a judge in Duluth for 16 years, will become the next president and CEO of the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation, the organization’s Board of Trustees announced today.

Floerke, 55, takes over from David Montgomery, who has led the foundation on an interim basis since July while the board searched for a permanent replacement for Holly Sampson. In June, Sampson retired after 30 years leading the organization.

“We needed the right leader to direct this community institution,” said David Kropid, board chair. “We have found that leader in Shaun. He has had significant impact on our courts and our community, creating innovations and reforms that have improved and saved lives. This is a new opportunity for him and the foundation to help our entire.”

Floerke said he was not looking to leave Minnesota’s Sixth Judicial District, where he has served as a judge since 2004, including four years as chief judge. But he said that when Kropid and Dan Lew, the Sixth Judicial District’s chief public defender and a foundation board member, approached him, he couldn’t stop thinking about the possibilities that the job presented.

“I was so energized that I couldn’t get to sleep until after 1 in the morning,” he said in his application letter to the board. “The resources that the foundation oversees and the work it does is incredible. The vision that the foundation is pursuing around the Opportunity Rising Initiative, COVID-19 relief work and the huge reach it has into our communities is inspiring.”

Floerke said the foundation provides a chance for him, along with the organization’s donors, staff and partners, to have impact on lives of people in the Northland, improving and helping them proactively in ways that can prevent situations he sees in his courtroom.

“My vision and effort always go into pulling together teams of folks who are willing to roll up their sleeves and do the work to address challenging problems on the ground,” he said. “This position gives me a new opportunity to work with others to address those issues.”

Floerke will formally step into the role Jan. 11. He has notified Gov. Tim Walz that he plans to retire from the bench effective Jan. 1. He was appointed as a judge in 2004 and elected or re-elected three times, most recently 2018. He served as chief judge from 2012 to 2016.

As a judge, he founded and presided over the South St. Louis DWI Court, a national academy court with the National Association of Drug Court Professionals; the South St. Louis County Safe Babies Court; and the Duluth Domestic Violence Restorative Circles Process. He is a national leader and trainer in how courts handle cases involving substance abuse disorder and family matters. He is a member of the National Judicial Opioid Task Force, a judicial advisory board member for the Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility and a faculty trainer for and a member of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

Before coming to the bench, Floerke worked in the St. Louis County Attorney's Office in Duluth and the Steele County Attorney's Office in Owatonna, Minn. He also was a lawyer in private practice in Duluth and Owatonna. He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin and a law degree from the University of Minnesota. He and his wife, Sara, have five children, all in their 20s or teens, and live in Duluth's Lincoln Park neighborhood.

Kropid and the board thanked Montgomery for serving as interim president and CEO. Montgomery will return to his position on the board after helping Floerke through a transition.

"We could not have taken the time to find the right person to lead this community institution without Dave's willingness to take the helm for the last six months," Kropid said. "He has not only continued to lead but also has worked with the staff to make important changes that have strengthened this organization and positioned it for greater success."

Founded in 1983, the foundation is one of the Northland's farthest-reaching and most impactful nonprofits. Its mission is to encourage private giving for the public good through a community endowment built by gifts from thousands of individuals and organizations.

The foundation makes grants to other nonprofits for projects and to individuals for college scholarships. It also provides leadership on community initiatives in seven counties of northeast Minnesota and three counties of northwest Wisconsin. Its coverage area extends from International Falls on the north to Carlton on the south and from Aitkin on the west to Ashland on the east.

Since its start, it has distributed more than \$60 million in grants and scholarships and has established more than 430 funds. Some of its major initiatives include: Opportunity Rising, a project to narrow the opportunity gap between rich and poor children in Duluth and Superior; a regional response to economic and health crises posed by COVID-19; PPREP, a response to the 2012 Duluth flood that has built community disaster resiliency; and Speak Your Peace: The Civility Project, a nationally known effort that encourages civic engagement by building and sustaining civil discourse.

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