



GREAT★NORTH
INNOCENCE PROJECT

2026
SPONSORSHIP
PROPOSAL



LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear friends,

This year, the Great North Innocence Project celebrates 25 years of pursuing justice for the innocent.

What began in 2001 as a bold vision among Twin Cities attorneys has grown into a regional organization serving Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Over the past 25 years, GNIP has freed 15 innocent people, passed six bills to strengthen our criminal legal system, and built a powerful network of supporters and pro bono partners committed to fairness and truth.

The momentum continues. In 2025, GNIP achieved major victories for three innocent people:

- **Bryan Hooper, Sr.**, freed and fully exonerated after 27 years of wrongful incarceration, returned home to his family and began rebuilding the life that was taken from him.
- **Robert Kaiser** was acquitted in GNIP's first-ever retrial, fully exonerated after 12 years of fighting to prove the truth of his wrongful conviction.
- **Sherman Townsend**, our first freed client, was exonerated 28 years after his wrongful conviction and can now move forward with his record fully cleared.

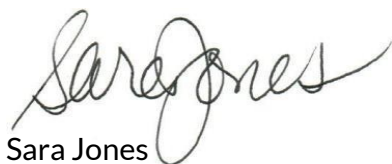
Last year, GNIP also reviewed **237 requests for assistance**, investigated **137 cases**, and formally represented **18 clients**. We educated more than **2,000 people** about wrongful convictions and received **2,518 hours of pro bono legal support** to advance justice for the innocent. We also embarked on a comprehensive needs assessment and program development process to create a **more robust reentry planning and post-freedom support system and resources for our clients**.

As we step into our 25th anniversary year, we are guided by our **2026 Benefit for Innocence theme, True North**. Like the North Star, our mission remains steady and unwavering. We honor the path that brought us here, including the incredible constellations of partners and supporters who have made our work possible, while lighting the way forward for those still waiting for justice.

We hope you will join us as a corporate sponsor during this historic year. Enclosed you will find our **2026 Sponsorship Proposal**, including opportunities to stand with us at our 25th Anniversary Benefit for Innocence: True North on September 23, 2026, at the Nicollet Island Pavillion.

Together, we can ensure that the next 25 years shine even brighter.

With gratitude,



Sara Jones
Executive Director

sjones@gn-ip.org

ABOUT THE GREAT NORTH INNOCENCE PROJECT

The Great North Innocence Project frees people convicted of crimes they did not commit and prevents wrongful convictions. Since 2001, GNIP has freed 15 innocent people who have spent a combined 226 years in prison.

Fighting to Free the Innocent

Each year, our team works diligently to screen hundreds of requests for help, to give freedom back to people in prison for crimes they did not commit. The Great North Innocence Project staff, law students, investigators, and volunteer attorneys spend thousands of hours carefully analyzing these cases to determine whether there is new evidence that could show actual innocence. We litigate cases where newly discovered evidence is identifiable and can provide clear and convincing proof of actual innocence.

Shining Light on Injustices

Through school and community presentations, we inform the public about the causes and consequences of wrongful convictions to raise awareness and support for our work. We provide practicing attorneys, judges, and law enforcement officers with continuing education and expert information on wrongful convictions and the best practices to prevent them. We teach law school courses on wrongful convictions and provide experiential learning opportunities to the next generation of lawyers to build a better justice system

Advocating for Change

We work independently and in coalition with other organizations to pass laws and implement policies that minimize chances of wrongful convictions and remedy injustices. This upstream work to prevent wrongful convictions improves the criminal legal system overall in meaningful ways

Supporting Clients Beyond Release

Freedom is only the beginning. After years or often decades of wrongful incarceration, our clients face significant barriers to rebuilding their lives. GNIP is working to expand our support to clients for reentry and post-release by assisting with record clearance, connecting them to compensation and community resources, and helping them secure housing, employment, and stability. Our commitment does not end with their exoneration. We remain a steady partner as our clients rebuild their futures.

2026 SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Benefit for Innocence Sponsor | \$3,500 - \$30,000

Choose from five levels of sponsorship to support GNIP's largest annual event, the **Benefit for Innocence: True North**, scheduled for **Wednesday, September 23, 2026**, at Nicollet Island Pavilion in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The event will bring together over 350 attendees, including legal professionals, business leaders, and community supporters. The evening will feature a keynote speaker, inspiring stories from our freed and exonerated clients, and awards for our partners in our critical work. Attendees will enjoy food stations, a complimentary welcome drink, and various fundraising activities. Thanks to the generous support of our sponsors and supporters, the Benefit for Innocence raises nearly \$350,000 annually, funding our efforts to free people convicted of crimes they did not commit and preventing wrongful convictions. A grid of sponsorship levels and benefits is included for your review.

Freed Client Video Sponsor | \$15,000

Share the story of one of our 12 freed or exonerated clients through the sponsorship of a client video. Your organization's name and logo will be featured in the video and included in all promotions in the e-newsletter and on social media. The video will live on the GNIP website and YouTube channel, and will be used in presentations to academic, legal, corporate and community audiences for years to come.

Year End Campaign Match Sponsor | \$10,000

Double your impact and inspire giving to the Great North Innocence Project by sponsoring a matching gift for our Year End Campaign. Your organization's generous gift will be used as an incentive for our donors to make their gift by year end to provide justice for those who have been wrongfully convicted. Your organization's name and matching gift will be promoted in 500+ mailed solicitation letters, 2,000+ email solicitations, in all Year End communications including the year-in-review email, donor thank you letters and across all social media platforms during the month of December.

2026 Benefit for Innocence

Sponsor Recognition & Benefits

	Champion	Defender	Advocate	Partner	Ally
	\$30,000+	\$15,000	\$10,000	\$6,500	\$3,500
Name & logo in video	★				
Name & logo on mailed & digital invitation	★				
Podium acknowledgement during program	★	★	★		
Individualized social media recognition	★	★	★		
Name & logo on event webpage	★	★	★		
Name & logo in e-newsletter	★	★	★	★	Name only
Inclusion in printed program	Name & logo + Full page ad (inside cover)	Name & logo + Full page ad	Name & logo + 1/2 page ad	Name & logo	Name only
Exclusive introduction of keynote speaker	★				
Exclusive sponsor benefits *see options*	★	★			
VIP Wine Pour	★	★	★		
Sponsored Table Signage	★	★	★		
Benefit For Innocence Tickets	30 tickets (3 tables)	20 tickets (2 tables)	10 tickets (1 table)	10 tickets (1 table)	4 tickets

2026 Benefit for Innocence

Exclusive Sponsor Benefits



2024 Keynote Speaker Amanda Knox

Champion | \$30,000

Champion Sponsorship Benefits *(all apply)*

- ★ Keynote Speaker Sponsor
- ★ Benefit Video Sponsor
- ★ Invitation & Save-the-Date Sponsor

Defender | \$15,000

Defender Sponsorship Options *(Select 1)*

- ★ Welcome Drink / Happy Hour Sponsor
- ★ Award Sponsor
- ★ Heads or Tails Game Sponsor
- ★ Silent Auction Sponsor
- ★ Printed Program Sponsor
- ★ Client Tables Sponsor



Freed and exonerated client Bryan Hooper Sr. with family



Freed and exonerated client Robert Kaiser

2025 GREAT NORTH INNOCENCE PROJECT SPONSORS

DEFENDERS

FAEGRE DRINKER*
FREDRIKSON & BYRON*

ADVOCATES

DELTA AIR LINES
FISH & RICHARDSON*
GUSTAFSON GLUEK
THOMSON REUTERS*

PARTNERS

BRADFORD ANDRESEN NORRIE & CAMAROTTO*
CARLSON CASPERS*
CHESTNUT CAMBRONNE*
CIRESI CONLIN LLP*
DORSEY & WHITNEY LLP*
HUSCH BLACKWELL*
TAFT*

ALLIES

BRANDT KETTWICK CRIMINAL DEFENSE
CONTRERAS EDIN LAW, PA*
FORSGREN FISHER
MCCALMONT DEMAREA
TYSVER LLP
NILAN JOHNSON LEWIS*
NORTON ROSE FULBRIGHT*
OLD NATIONAL BANK
ROBINS KAPLAN LLP*

*Pro Bono Partner

2026 GREAT NORTH INNOCENCE PROJECT SPONSOR FORM

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Sponsor(s) Name: _____

PLEASE WRITE OUT EXACTLY HOW IT SHOULD APPEAR ON ALL PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL

Sponsorship Level:

\$30,000 CHAMPION SPONSOR (\$27,000 tax deductible)

\$15,000 DEFENDER SPONSOR (\$12,000 tax deductible)

\$10,000 ADVOCATE SPONSOR (\$9,000 tax deductible)

\$6,500 PARTNER SPONSOR (\$5,500 tax deductible)

\$3,500 ALLY SPONSOR (\$3,100 tax deductible)

\$15,000 Client Video Sponsor (fully tax deductible)

\$10,000 Year End Campaign Match Sponsor (fully tax deductible)

----- Check Enclosed OR Credit Card -----

If paying by credit card:

Name on Credit Card: _____

Credit Card Number: _____

Expiration Date: _____ CVC: _____

Sponsor recognition will not begin until payment is received. To receive the most complete recognition, please return sponsor form by July 31, 2026

All forms returned without payment will be considered pledges.