



For Immediate Release
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GRANTS GIVE LOCAL WOMEN AND GIRLS A LEG UP IN A BAD ECONOMY

Women's Fund increases awards to \$260,000 for nonprofits

Easthampton, MA, July 6, 2009 – Twenty-three area organizations working with women and girls got a boost recently when they received grant awards from the Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts. The Fund dispersed \$260,000 in "social change" grants to organizations in the four counties of western Massachusetts.

This year the Fund had increased its grant making from \$100,000 to an unprecedented \$260,000, more than 150%. "We knew that this economic crisis was going to hit nonprofits and the women and girls they work with very, very hard," said Carla Oleska, executive director of the Fund, "We responded by making this large increase. Still, we received \$1.3 million in requests, far more than we could support," said Oleska.

Many of awardees received multi-year grants as well as general operating support, allowing them to focus their funds in ways that respond to their general needs. Julie Kumble, director of grants and programs, says that despite the economic pressures on nonprofits, many are responding as creatively as they can. "Even though the challenges are intense, and we wish we could support more applicants, we're seeing nonprofits try to address basic needs of women and girls, and at the same time shift the fundamental factors that contribute to those needs. This kind of dedication and strategy is uplifting, and it's the kind of work we support." Several of the grants focus on community organizing, advocacy and policy change, Kumble said.

"The Women's Fund supports social services in the context of social change," says Kumble. "It's important to help women and girls through direct service but we also have to change the underlying issues that contribute to their situations in the first place, such as economic disparities or access to opportunities. We give our grantee partners funding to run their programs along with tools to help them measure how they are making an impact on these deeper social issues." The social change grants fall into in three basic areas: Educational Access and Success, Economic Justice, and Safety and Freedom from Violence.

Now in its twelfth year, the Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts has given over \$1 million in grants reaching over 20,000 women and girls. Oleska says that the impact has been huge.

“When you change the life of one woman, you also impact the life of her children and indeed the community. The change can be tremendous.” Oleska cites community members for the Fund’s ability to award \$260,000 this year and last, saying that “It’s a testament to people who care about women and girls and who make \$15 or \$1500 contributions that allow us to support these organizations. Our work starts and ends at the community level.” Oleska stresses that in addition to making grant awards, the Fund also gives their grantees support in the form of organizational development workshops, free passes to the Fund’s Capacity Building conference, professional consultation from community volunteers, and events where grantees can network and learn from each other.

The 2009 grantees are:

Educational Access and Success Grants

The Care Center, Holyoke, *Multi-Year Operating Support*

The Care Center’s mission is to provide resources and support to empower young women and their families so that they may continue their education, increase self-confidence, develop leadership skills and make healthy life choices leading toward self-sufficiency. Hampden County.

Community Action, *Program Grant*

“The Family Learning Center” aims to break intergenerational cycles of poverty and low literacy by helping 15 women and their children reach their education, employment and other family goals through a comprehensive family literacy program. Franklin County.

Enlace de Familias de Holyoke/Holyoke Family Network, Inc., *Program Grant*

Holyoke Unites/Holyoke Se Une is a community-wide coalition that aims to improve the quality of life in Holyoke by promoting collaboration among existing groups and individuals in the city. The coalition’s goal of achieving a 100% graduation rate in the Holyoke Schools will use community organizing as a key strategy and will focus on women’s leadership development as part of that strategy. Hampden County.

Flying Cloud Institute, *Multi-Year Program Grant*

“Young Women in Science” offers education in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) to upper elementary girls during the school year and in a summer camp setting where high school girls are their mentors and club leaders. Berkshire County.

Girl Scouts of Central and Western Massachusetts, *Operating Support*

Girl Scouts of Central and Western Massachusetts builds girls of courage, confidence and character and helps girls become leaders through discovering, taking action to make the world a better place, and connecting with others. All four counties.

Girls Inc. of Holyoke, *Multi-Year Operating Support*

Girls Incorporated of Holyoke inspires all girls to be strong, smart and bold by providing them the opportunity to develop and achieve their full potential through a wide array of programs ranging from school-based and after-school education and activities.
Hampden County.

Girls Incorporated of the Berkshires, *Operating Support*

Girls Incorporated of the Berkshires, a program of the Gladys Allen Brigham Community Center, inspires all girls to be strong, smart and bold through its camp, community center, and outreach programs in gender equity and empowerment for school-age girls and teens.
Berkshire County.

The Gray House, *Program Grant*

“Community Education Support Program” provides literacy education and English for Speakers of Other Languages services to refugee women from Africa so they can gain language skills and increase their ability to navigate the systems around them and provide for their families.
Hampden County.

Helen Berube Teen Parent Program, *Multi-Year Operating Support*

The Helen Berube Teen Parent Program provides comprehensive support to meet the educational, health, and social service needs of pregnant and parenting teens and their infants in order to ensure that teens receive their high school diploma or G.E.D. and that their children succeed as well.
Berkshire County.

Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts, *Program Grant*

“Get Real” is a comprehensive middle school sexual education curriculum that will be offered to students and be taught to teachers at schools throughout the Hampden County region.
Hampden County.

Russian Community Association of Massachusetts, *Program Grant*

The organization will help Meskhetian women refugees improve their employment preparedness, participate in ESL classes, and receive education about family law, domestic violence and the American educational system.
Hampden County.

YEAH Network, *Program Grant*

“Youth Empowerment Adolescent Health (YEAH) Network,” which addresses the Hampden County teen birth rate through youth participation in a broad-based coalition, works with an adolescent advisory board to address teen pregnancy through research collection in community needs assessments and to lead their own community advocacy and awareness campaigns and events.
Hampden County.

Square One, *Program Grant*

“*Love and Literacy Across the Miles*” bedtime storybook project allows incarcerated mothers to read to their children on DVD’s as a means of preserving the mother-child bond, supporting the surrogate caregiver and engaging three family generations of women, improving communication strategies, and increasing literacy supports.
Hampden County.

Treehouse Foundation, Program Grant

“Hear Our Voice Initiative” offers skill building and training to women and girls so they can become advocates of child welfare and other policies, and ultimately improve conditions for children who have experienced foster care.
Hampshire County.

Step Forward/Step Ahead – Elms College, Program Grant

Step Forward/Step Ahead offers underserved girls opportunities to improve their academics, expand their cultural and social horizons, develop leadership skills, and pursue college and career goals through an intense fine arts and academic program during the summer (residential program) and school-year 'Saturday Success' program.
Hampden County.

Economic Justice Grants

HAP, Inc., Program Grant

“Family Self-Sufficiency Program” helps low-income women move from dependence on public assistance to economic self-sufficiency through job skill development, comprehensive career planning, counseling and case management.
Hampden County.

MotherWoman, Inc., Program Grant

“MomsRising of the Pioneer Valley,” the bipartisan political arm of the organization, organizes a coalition of mothers and their allies to take political action on social and economic justice issues impacting mothers and their families through education, training, outreach and public events.
Hampshire County, Hampden and Franklin Counties.

New England Learning Center for Women in Transition (NELCWIT), Program Grant

NELCWIT will incorporate an economic assessment curriculum (Personal Economic Planning or PEP) into their advocacy and counseling work with survivors, and will also offer training in the curriculum to all providers serving rural western Massachusetts.
All four counties.

Walaalo Somali Sisters Collective, Program Grant

The Walaalo Somali Sisters Collective helps Somali women create income opportunities, self-sufficiency and a culture-based micro-business enterprise by offering workshops, business training and cross-cultural exchanges.
Hampden County.

Weston Rehabilitation Associates, Inc., *Program Grant*

Weston's Employment and Training Program supports women in transition from jail and/or in-patient drug treatment by offering them on-site employment, employment skills development, economic literacy, and career planning and transition.
Hampden County.

Safety and Freedom from Violence

Safe Passage, *Operating Support*

Safe Passage serves women and children who have experienced physical or emotional abuse by offering services and engaging the community, and strives to create a community that does not tolerate violence against women and children.
Hampshire County.

Victim Rights Law Center, *Operating Support*

The Victim Rights Law Center (VRLC) provides civil legal services to victims of sexual assault by recruiting and training pro bono attorneys, forging closer relationships with other service providers (including law enforcement, prosecutors, rape crisis centers, etc.), and training staff members from service organizations to identify civil legal needs of victims and make referrals to VRLC.

All four counties.

Womanshelter/Compañeras, *Multi-Year Operating Support*

Womanshelter/Compañeras assists, supports and empowers those whose lives are affected by battering or abuse by offering intervention and stabilization services including emergency shelter, 24-hour hotline, counseling, support groups, and advocacy.
Primarily Hampden County.

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