20 Years of Community Health Grantmaking

The agility of annual grantmaking helps nonprofits keep pace with emerging opportunities and needs. In 2016, thirteen grants from $6,500 to $22,000 supported initiatives that varied from violence prevention to early childhood mental health.

“In health care, nothing is stagnant,” says Toni McGuire, president and CEO of Edward M. Kennedy Community Health Center. “These grants have enabled us to test new technologies and processes to improve the health of our patients as well as delivery of care. If they work, they become part of what we do. Programs seeded by these grants include one that helped decrease infant mortality by countering low birth weights. Other grants have supported services to our growing refugee population and helped us expand our dental practice.”

Dismas House of Massachusetts, Inc. helps former prisoners rebuild their lives, including their health. “While two thirds of the general prison population returns to prison,” says David McMahon, co-executive director of Dismas House, “two thirds of our clients stay out.

“Many arrive at our door with major mental and physical health needs. Foundation grants helped us build case management and counseling staff and a recent grant funded medical transportation for residents. These grants set us on a trajectory to make access to primary health care central to what we do.”

Grant helps dental practice expand and meet high demand for services.

Each year, the Foundation distributes $200,000 in grants from its $4.5 million Fallon/OrNda Community Health Fund. These grants strengthen programs that bring preventive and family care to the most vulnerable, including children and youth, veterans, young parents, the elderly, refugees and homeless families.

The donor advised fund was established in 1996 from the sale of St. Vincent Hospital to the former OrNda Healthcorp., which also acquired a stake in the Fallon Clinic, now part of Reliant Medical Group. With an endowment gift of $4 million to the Foundation, the transaction between OrNda and the Fallon Foundation, Inc. created a perpetual source of community health grants. The committee that reviews proposals and recommends grants includes members of the business and health communities.

Make a difference today. Call Kelly Stimson at 508-755-0980 or email donorservices@greaterworcester.org.
Q: How does philanthropy come up in your conversation with a client?

A: Clients may bring up their interest in leaving a legacy. If appropriate, I’ll ask if a client has thoughts about charitable giving. For example, if I’m advising a widowed individual, a mature couple without heirs, or people who have dedicated their lives to a field such as education, I’m likely to raise the question.

Q: How might you bring up the Greater Worcester Community Foundation?

A: If a client considers leaving a legacy, the Foundation can be a helpful resource to satisfy this desire. It has a proven and reliable structure for giving, invests funds well and administers grants in perpetuity, so donors fulfill their wishes now and in the future.

Some clients want to set up a scholarship to honor or memorialize a loved one. The Foundation offers a wonderful structure to administer the scholarship, including volunteer committees who select recipients—activities that could be a real burden to do on one’s own.

It’s very satisfying to leave a legacy that benefits a cherished cause. There are many ways to do it. Some are more complex than others. I like to keep things simple. The Foundation provides a structure that makes it easy for people to make their community a better place.

Advisor’s Corner: Marvin S. Silver Raises the Question

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Nonprofit Support Center: Building Better Boards

Leadership is an interactive art, particularly within a nonprofit, whose leaders include both staff and a volunteer board. Fostering leadership that capitalizes on positive relationships between both groups, the Foundation’s Nonprofit Support Center conducted a workshop in April entitled “Board Members: Building a strong partnership with your executive director.” Sponsored by the Kirby Foundation Fund the workshop, conducted by consultant Gayle L. Gifford, drew 30 board members from 12 nonprofits. “Effective partnerships require mutual trust, clear communications and two-way feedback,” says Gayle, who guided participants in discussion and case studies that linked recent research with real-world practice.

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A partner at Christopher, Hays, Wojcik & Marvicos, LLP in Westborough, Marvin S. Silver concentrates his practice in estate planning and administration, business, tax and elder law. A frequent speaker and author on subjects relating to trusts and estates, Marvin was named Best Lawyers 2015 Trusts & Estates “Lawyer of the Year” in Worcester. A Foundation corporator and member of its Professional Advisor Network, Marvin also serves on the Board of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce.
Outreach & Education: “Backstage Pass” for Donors

Every year, from March through August, the Foundation invites donors and corporators to take part in small group visits to grantee sites, where they observe nonprofits in action. Participants read the nonprofit’s grant application in advance, and then, accompanied by Foundation staff, meet with the nonprofit’s CEO and see its services at work. Following the visit, they share observations.

“The group’s feedback matters,” says Scott Rossiter, who serves on the Foundation’s Community Grants Committee. “We value their reports when reviewing grant proposals.”

Urging donors to take part, Scott says, “These visits are a backstage pass to see what’s going on in our region’s non-profits.”

Scholarship Spotlight: Fulfilling an Athlete’s Dream

A shy child who endured a stutter, Mark MacPherson Lightbown came into his own through sports. The 1972 graduate of Northbridge High School in Whitinsville discovered his athletic talents as a motivated and skilled member of the basketball and swim teams at Whitin Community Center. A lettered basketball player at Dean Junior College, Mark graduated from Ithaca College in 1978 aspiring to become a physical education teacher or coach to mentor young athletes.

“Mark found himself as an athlete,” said his sister Susan, noting that Mark was also a devoted acolyte at Trinity Episcopal Church.

In 1979, when Mark lost his life in an auto accident, his family and friends responded to the tragedy by raising funds to create a scholarship in his honor.

Offered to Northbridge High graduates preparing for a career in physical education, health or recreation, the scholarship grants renewable awards to students each year. Since its start in 1980, the fund has granted $86,500 to 23 students.

“These young people share Mark’s values,” said Mark’s sister Andrea. “By giving to others who share his dream, Mark is still with us.”

Special Summer Grants Help Around Town: Smart Fun Rules at Summer Camp

At Lakeside Summer Camp, kids prepared to visit the Mystic Aquarium by reading about sea creatures and building an aquarium. They also learned to swim, cooked healthy meals and whether planning a menu or crafting an art project, honed their skills in math, reading and science.

The day camp is a partnership between the YMCA and Valley Residents for Improvement, Inc., a tenant organization for the Worcester Housing Authority. Its six weeks of discovery and fun was funded by an $18,000 grant from the Foundation, which made grants to 11 other summer programs serving urban children and youth.

Y camp directors designed the program to suit first-through-seventh graders at Lakeside, and Friendly House, Inc. supplied nutritious lunches. Grouped by age, campers attended both the Y’s Central Community Branch and Lakeside’s community center, where Worcester Public Schools literacy specialists coached camp staff on how to incorporate learning into daily activities.

“Kids got to enjoy summer where they live,” says Pamela Suprenant, regional associate executive director of the YMCA of Central Massachusetts, “and also explored the world beyond Lakeside.”

Visit greaterworcester.org for a complete listing of all Foundation grants.

Outreach & Education: “Backstage Pass” for Donors

An Outreach & Education visit to the Canal District Alliance featured a tour in a horse-drawn carriage narrated by student guides.
In June, Gerald M. Gates, president, AmWINS/Stop Loss Insurance, became the Foundation’s Board Chair. He and his wife, Patricia Finnegan Gates, have three children and live in Princeton. Gerry reflects on Foundation priorities.

“Our Early Childhood Initiative, we are investing significant resources into helping the youngest among us.”

– Gerry Gates

“An organization needs a motivating mission and sound strategies to stay on point and fulfill its goals. The Foundation is well positioned in this regard, with a board that refreshes its strategic plan on a regular basis.

“As part of this process, board members shared their desire for the Foundation to achieve major impact by bringing increased focus to an area of critical need. As a result, we are investing significant Foundation resources into helping the youngest among us. The Foundation’s Early Childhood Initiative is working with the entire community to improve a child’s earliest years, which set the path for success in school and life.

“Another new commitment is Leadership Worcester, our joint program with the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce to develop future civic leaders.

“At the same time, the Foundation continues to do what it does so well: strengthen nonprofits working on multiple fronts with grantmaking and Nonprofit Support Center programs that help these organizations increase their effectiveness.

“We remain the go-to resource for people who want to make wise investments in their community. Drawing millennials into the Foundation is an interest of mine. They bring fresh approaches to their endeavors, including philanthropy.”