

THE ACORN

News from the Greater Worcester Community Foundation | November 2012



Whether a fund grants \$3,000 or \$320,000 per year, its gifts multiply in power through the Foundation, creating life-changing opportunities for our most vulnerable: from work experience that creates new opportunities for youth to a transformative program that starts fostering college readiness in childhood.

Featured Articles



Y.O.U. Inc. President and CEO Elizabeth Folcarelli and Tom Jenkins, its board vice chair, attended the Nonprofit Support Center's fall session on leadership. Page 2



YouthWorks provides urban teens meaningful summer jobs. Page 3



Two citizen-run initiatives are bringing local neighborhoods the joys of leafy, healthy trees. Page 3



Education Initiative grantees include Bancroft School's Elm Park Partnership, which reduces summer learning loss in neighborhood children.

Foundation Begins Transformative Education Initiative

The Foundation has launched a pioneering Education Initiative designed to transform academic outcomes for disadvantaged students.

Its premise is that addressing early childhood education and care, the English-speaking ability of parents, summer learning loss of middle-school children, and the cross-cultural adaptation skills of immigrants can help high-need children succeed in school and in life. The Foundation has a long track record of investing in such activities. "What's new with our Educational Initiative," says Ann Lisi, Foundation CEO, "is that we're taking an entirely proactive approach. We're sponsoring an integrated strategy to improve life options for some of the most disadvantaged in our city."

In January 2012, the Foundation awarded grants totaling \$320,000 to nine nonprofits, each a previous grantee with proven strength in its field. Grantees included Latino Education Institute; Literacy Volunteers of Greater Worcester; and the Southeast Asian Coalition of Central Massachusetts; as well as Worcester Public Schools Adult Basic Education. "We've increased instructional hours, lowered the teacher-student ratio, and added life skills

to help parents navigate the school system and seek employment," says Mary Jo Marion, executive director of the Latino Education Institute.

Edward Street Child Services received grants to bring a teacher into five childcare agencies and continue a public-private project to align preschool through grade three curricula. Executive Director Dianne Bruce says, "Research shows that children who experience high quality early education are more likely to go to college. But success takes coordination across the birth-to-grade three spectrum to build a strong foundation for the future."

Grants will expand the African Community Education Program for refugee children, the Elm Park Partnership at Bancroft School to stem summer learning loss in neighborhood children, and the after-school coaching program at Clark University's Jacob Hiatt Center for Urban Education.

As a long-term endeavor, the Education Initiative may renew existing grants and extend funding to other participants. "Helping vulnerable children succeed is a permanent obligation of the Foundation," says Ann.

Initiatives Foster Nonprofit Leadership

The Foundation's Nonprofit Support Center has begun a multifaceted approach to building leadership skills within the region's nonprofits.



Nonprofit Support Center Advisory Committee Chair Chick Weiss introduces the October 16th session on leadership development.

"Leadership development is a key challenge," says Special Projects Officer Gail Randall, who organizes programs that are both immediate and forward thinking in focus.

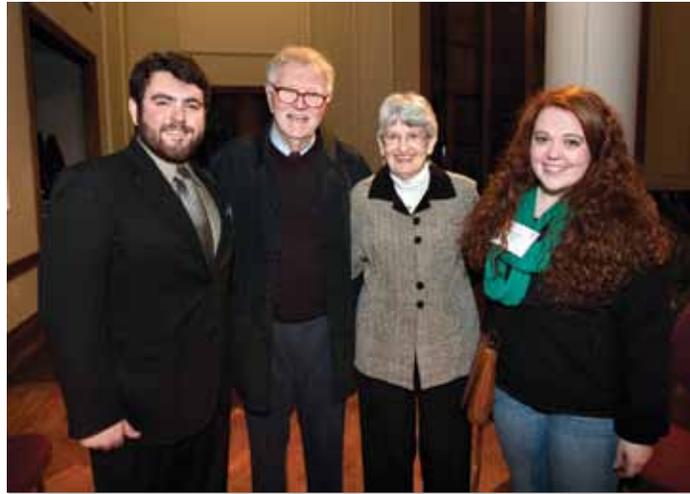
In October, the Center conducted a focus group of young nonprofit professionals. "We're finding out what's on their minds," says Gail, "so we can learn how to help them stay in the field."

Anticipating many changes at the top in Worcester nonprofits—25 transitions have been announced within the last year—the Foundation has developed a grant resource to help organizations with transition planning and support for incoming leaders.

More than 45 executives and board chairs took part in an October 16th session on leadership development at the Worcester Club led by Bridgespan Group Partner Kirk Kramer.

"Leadership development isn't mysterious, accidental, or something that can be postponed," Kirk said. "It is a systematic process that nearly every nonprofit can implement." 🍷

Scholarships Connect People Across Generations



At the scholarship reception, James and Joan Lyons meet Archie and Elizabeth Bellos, two recipients of the Lieutenant James F. "Jay" Lyons III Memorial Scholarship, which honors their son.

With 120 funds awarding about 350 scholarships a year, the Foundation provides more scholarships than any other organization serving Worcester County. In January, the Foundation held its first annual scholarship reception to celebrate the bonds these funds nurture among people across generations and walks of life. Hosted at Clark University, the evening drew 200 scholarship committee volunteers, recipients, parents and donors.

Among the guests were James and Joan Lyons, whose son Jay (Clark '87) was one of six firefighters who perished in the 1999 Worcester Cold Storage Warehouse fire. The couple met two recipients of the Lieutenant James F. "Jay" Lyons III Memorial Scholarship: siblings Archie (Holy Cross '12) and Elizabeth Bellos (Clark '16). "Archie spoke about our son and his sacrifice," said James, "and Elizabeth told us she'll run in the annual race that funds the scholarship, on behalf of other students. We were thrilled to see how young people honor our son's legacy." 🍷

Foundation Joins Statewide Drive to Close Winter Gaps in Food, Fuel and Shelter

In December 2011, the Foundation joined MassNeeds, a statewide consortium of 25 grantmakers striving to address food, fuel and shelter shortages that peak in the winter. Founded in 2009 by the Boston Foundation, Eos Foundation and Highland Street Foundation, MassNeeds advances its Coordinated Winter Assistance Grantmaking initiative through its website (massneeds.org) and biannual meetings.

Member foundations pledged more than \$3.5 million in 2011. The Foundation directed \$30,000 of its discretionary funds to four nonprofits: \$20,000 for fuel assistance to the Worcester Community Action Council; \$4,000 for food and shelter to Friendly House; \$4,000 to Community Health Link for food and clothing; and \$2,000 to Rachel's Table for an emergency milk fund.

"With homeless neighbors sleeping in tents



Worcester resident Ann Brooks is among the people who stay warm in winter thanks to fuel assistance from Worcester Community Action Council, Inc.

while government aid declines," says Senior Program Officer Pamela Kane, "MassNeeds is a vehicle to share know-how, step up support, and be more proactive in meeting basic needs." 🍷

Donor Doubles Grant, Secures Summer Jobs for Youth

Each year, the Foundation Mini-Grant Program distributes up to \$50,000 in grants no bigger than \$3,000. Although small in size, these grants meet pressing community needs that can be large in impact.

Take the grant that enabled Worcester Community Action Council, Inc. to employ a full cohort of young people in its 2012 YouthWorks Summer Jobs Program. This program enables low-income youth ages 14 to 21 to acquire meaningful jobs throughout Worcester.

Faced with a \$6,000 shortfall, the agency rapidly found support at the Foundation. CEO Ann Lisi and Senior Program Officer Lois Smith contacted Richard Pyle, who promptly agreed to match a \$3,000 mini-grant with \$3,000 from his donor advised fund.

“Employing youth is a highly worthwhile cause, and this was a compelling opportunity to join the Foundation in contributing to this goal,” says Richard, a business executive. “Since the Foundation regarded this program as worthy of funding, I had full confidence in its merits.”



YouthWorks participants Junior and Kassandra worked at Regional Environmental Council's Mobile Farmer's Market

Eric Roldan:

Young Grantmaker Puts Compassion to Work

Raised in a family of human services professionals, Eric Roldan gained a sense of compassion at a young age. As a member of the Foundation's Youth for Community Improvement (YCI) program from 1999 through 2003, Eric developed the skills to act on it.

“YCI helped me understand the grant process and learn to work throughout the community to advocate for others,” says Eric, who in June graduated from Springfield College with a master's in social work and became coordinator of the Homeless Families Program at the Family Health Center of Worcester.

“We become the voice of families who've lost everything,” says Eric, who supervises two case managers. “We work the system in Worcester County on their behalf, and get them stable as soon as possible.”

Eric still recalls a YCI visit to a grantee, a residential treatment center for boys. “They had so much baggage in their lives. Yet they were so excited about the community garden we funded.”



YCI alumnus Eric Roldan, MSW, joins (from left) Amarely Gutierrez, YWCA of Central Massachusetts, and Family Health Center colleague Kelly Walker at the Nonprofit Support Center Summer Social.

Countering Blight and Dwindling City Budgets, Citizens Nurture Trees

Two citizen-run initiatives are bringing local neighborhoods the joys of leafy, healthy trees.

“The City of Worcester has zero money in its operating budget to plant trees along sidewalks,” says attorney Dennis Gorman, who remembers a far greener city five decades ago. “Some 45,000 trees have been cut down and they're not replanted.”

Dennis notes that any resident can get a tree planted by sending a \$450 check to the Department of Public Works. Or they can contribute to the Worcester Street Tree Fund to support such plantings in perpetuity.



The Worcester Tree Initiative trains tree stewards, including its teen summer staff who help others learn to plant and tend their trees.

Taking a more immediate approach is the Worcester Tree Initiative, founded in 2009 to replace 30,000 trees lost to Asian longhorned beetles by 2014. “The Foundation manages our gifts and Worcester County Horticultural Society handles our finances,” says Peggy Middaugh, the program's director. “Foundation CEO Ann Lisi helped us quickly set up an arrangement that works well.”

The Initiative has already given 4,200 trees to residents, who attend a brief training session on how to plant and nurture the tree. “We create tree stewards,” says Peggy, noting that 350 trees have been planted at 40 schools. “Kids watch their trees like hawks.”

Greater Worcester Community Foundation

is a professional and compassionate steward of an ever-expanding community fund, which grows through the generosity of local people who seek to improve their communities in lasting ways.

The Foundation gives operating grants to nonprofit organizations, provides college scholarships to area high school students, and brings people together to build stronger communities. Our Nonprofit Support Center helps managers and board members use resources more effectively.

Our Mission: To build healthy and vibrant communities, now and in the future, through philanthropic leadership.

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In Profile: Board Member Ann Molloy



The Foundation offers “a host of charitable giving options that benefit donors of varied interests and means,” says board member Ann Molloy.

Challenges appeal to estate attorney Ann K. Molloy, a partner in the Worcester law firm Mountain, Dearborn & Whiting LLP and a Foundation director since 2011.

Ann’s very first backpacking trip, in early September, was a hut-to-hut traverse in New Hampshire’s Presidential Range with her daughter, Sarah, a seasoned mountaineer who teaches in a New Hampshire outdoor education program.

At Mount Holyoke College, Ann majored in classics. She regards her education in ancient languages as “good preparation for the challenges of the tax code.” Ann relishes the complexities of her specialty. “I’ve never found estate and trust work dry,” she says. “This practice combines intellectual challenges and problem solving with the ability to provide a service that others need. And I encounter a tremendous variety of people—from clients with limited means, who want to prepare a basic will or plan for the expense of nursing home care, to individuals with substantial wealth.”

Ann and her husband, Kenneth Stillman, MD, live in Northborough. Their son David, a junior at Middlebury College, shares his sister’s love of New England mountains.

In 1996, Foundation CEO Ann Lisi came calling on behalf of the Nominating Committee and invited Ann to become a corporator. “I found Ms. Lisi very engaging,” says Ann, “and I welcomed the opportunity to join an organization that does so much for the city as a whole.

“The Foundation is a highly flexible entity with a host of charitable giving options that benefit donors of varied interests and means,” says Ann, a member of the Foundation’s Professional Advisors Network. “It is a privilege to serve on its board and to work with so many thoughtful and creative individuals.”