Early Childhood Initiative

“P-3 Learning Hub” Offers Support from Prenatal Care through Grade 3

Worcester’s pilot is distinctive, notes Jacobson. “Most start with a segment, such as preschool through kindergarten,” says Jacobson. “Worcester’s pilot will take families from the prenatal, toddler and preschool years through the transition into kindergarten and on through grade three—the full spectrum.”

“We’re able to build on our community’s strengths,” says Christopher O’Keefe, Foundation vice president for program. “Our hubs are two elementary schools that bring committed leadership to this work. And we have excellent service providers as partners.”

The pilot’s “hubs” will be Woodland Academy and the Canterbury Street Magnet School. Partners include the Family Health Center of Worcester and the Worcester Family Partnership.

The pilot will involve neighborhood families even before their children attend school. Structured “play and learn” groups will engage families, and staff will link them to social services. The Family Health Center will support family health needs. In schools, the pilot will focus on enhancing teaching and learning, particularly for families who speak languages other than English at home.

“This project will help shape our future grantmaking,” says Chris. “We’ll learn what works and do more of it.”

Want to grow the good in your community? Contact Kelly Stimson at 508-755-0980 or donorservices@greaterworcester.org!
Increasing diversity, inclusiveness and equity within a workplace takes commitment, planning and practice. Two new workshops offered by the Foundation’s Nonprofit Support Center help local nonprofits make this commitment.

“Our sessions draw leaders from a spectrum of sectors, including the arts, social services, and health care,” says Valerie Zolezzi-Wyndham, president of Promoting Good, LLC, who conducts the sessions with Linda Cavaiol, executive director of the YWCA of Central Massachusetts. “We’re thrilled to see how many aspire to better reflect and serve our region’s diverse population.”

Participants gain coaching as they create and implement an action plan. Adrien C. Finlay, executive director of Music Worcester, says, “We’re looking at how greater inclusiveness can influence our outreach and education and even our contracting of artists.”

Grantmaking remains a family affair for Martha Densmore, who with her husband created the Martha L. and William P. Densmore Fund in 1999. Their donor advised fund continues to be a significant source of thoughtful grants to causes important to Martha and Bill, who died in 2013.

Now, Martha and her daughter, Deborah Cary, the fund’s successor advisor, team up to review promising programs and recommend grantees.

“My parents were extremely active in the Worcester community,” says Deborah, who directs Mass Audubon’s Broad Meadow Brook and Wachusett Meadow sanctuaries. “They created this fund to most effectively channel their giving.”

Deborah and her mother meet with prospective grantees. “We learn first hand about their needs, confer together and make our recommendations. I’m proud of my parents’ commitment and I’m delighted to join my mother in carrying on their grantmaking.”

Nonprofits have a stake in the 2020 Census. A robust count ensures that our local and state government agencies receive their fair share of federal funds (about $16 billion) earmarked to support social programs. In 2010, Worcester was an undercounted community despite its high usage of social services. The Foundation encourages all to participate in outreach that will encourage and prepare your constituents to take part in the census. Find out more at www.thecensusproject.org.

On September 20th, Foundation friends toured the historic Davis Publications building in downtown Worcester, also a center for local nonprofits, including many Foundation grantees.

Tour included: Technocopia, a maker space offering training workshops; Crocodile River Music, an African cultural center; ArtsWorcester, supporting visual artists; Edward Street Child Services; WICN-FM, featuring jazz and folk music; Worcester Clean Tech Incubator; and WPI’s Worcester Community Project Center.
Leicester Savings Bank Fund
Perpetual Hometown Support

Named for the town it served for 125 years, Leicester Savings Bank was a true community bank, integral to the lives and fortunes of its neighbors. So when the bank was acquired by Country Bank for Savings in 1997, the transaction included creation of a $1 million donor advised fund to benefit the town in perpetuity.

Over 20 years, the fund has awarded 329 grants totaling $874,983 while the fund balance remains over $1.1 million. “These grants touch everybody,” says Paul Fontaine, who chairs the committee that recommends grants, “from our Harvest Fair and food pantry to senior citizens’ concerts, nature walks, children’s sports, and an annual four-year scholarship.”

Residents submit applications in February and the committee meets in May to select grantees. “For a modest fee, the Foundation manages our fund and guides these processes so they’re easy for us,” says Paul. “And its investments keep our fund growing so it will benefit the town for generations to come. I’ve started my own fund. When I’m gone, it will still be working for the town.”

Creative Worcester
Foundation Drives Cultural Plan for Worcester

The Foundation has accepted the City of Worcester’s invitation to coordinate the development of a new Arts and Culture Plan for Worcester.

Already making an impact through its first round of grants, the Foundation’s Creative Worcester Initiative, funded by the Barr Foundation, was praised for its success in identifying Worcester’s distinctive arts and cultural resources and investing in these assets to enhance the city’s quality of life.

The Foundation is collaborating with the Worcester Cultural Coalition and City officials to develop a plan that integrates public- and private support of the arts within citywide master planning. The Worcester Cultural Plan will complement the city’s Master Plan and Strategic Plan, which are currently in development.

“Through its grants and planning leadership,” says Foundation Program Officer Jonathan Cohen, “the Foundation and its partners will move both our arts sector and city forward.”

Youth for Community Improvement
Learning Leadership

College of the Holy Cross sophomore Dorean Asuako values her three years with Youth for Community Improvement. “As a Ghanaian-American, I appreciated the diversity of my YCI group and how we grew together as grantmakers. I became a better listener and leader and learned how to steer conversations to include and benefit the whole group. Now as a campus resident assistant, I apply these skills guiding first-year students as they adapt to college and connect with helpful people and resources.”

Have you named the Foundation as beneficiary of a bequest, a trust, or a retirement plan? Join the Acorn Society so that we may be certain to understand and carry out your intentions. Call Kelly Stimson at 508-755-0980 today!
A leader of the Foundation’s Early Childhood Initiative, board member Jennifer Davis Carey, PhD, regards education as a community enterprise.

Jennifer is founding executive director of the Worcester Education Collaborative (WEC), which since 2010 has created alliances across sectors to advance programs that nurture children both in their home life and in school.

After graduating from Harvard, Jennifer headed its Undergraduate Minority Recruitment Program. From 1999 to 2003, she directed the state’s Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation and from 2003 to 2007 served as Massachusetts Secretary of Elder Affairs.

“I was eager to get back into education,” says Jennifer, adding that in her childhood home in Brooklyn, “Education and books were highly valued. And I was taught by the Sisters of St. Joseph, for whom education is a mission, a way of healing the world.”

As head of WEC, Jennifer found an ally in the Foundation. “Working with the Foundation puts early learning on the radar of other partners,” she says. WEC collaborates with social service agencies, schools and families to address factors that hinder development in children’s early years, including trauma and hunger. “We make progress by not treating these issues as silos,” says Jennifer, who with Timothy McGourthy, executive director of the Worcester Regional Research Bureau, led development of a strategic plan for education, Worcester’s first since 1992. The Worcester Public Schools, the Foundation, and other organizations took part. “With a plan,” says Jennifer, “we’re all rowing in same direction.”