

Local News



Community Foundation marks quarter century with a quarter million

Charitable organization awards grants to nonprofit groups, agencies, schools

Wednesday, March 18 | 9:43 p.m.

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Economic stimulus? How about a little social safety-net stimulus?

Here it comes: More than a quarter-million dollars in new grants will stimulate the services of local nonprofit groups and agencies of all sorts when the Community Foundation has its annual awards event today.

Twenty-seven nonprofit programs in Clark, Cowlitz and Skamania counties will receive a total of \$243,946 from the foundation's Community Giving Fund and Children's Trust Fund. The foundation also will allocate \$30,000 to its Principal's Checkbook program, which lets school building administrators spend cash on children's basic needs. This year, 94 schools in 16 Southwest Washington school districts will receive some of that money.

This year's other big winners will receive \$15,000 grants. The Clark County Food Bank will use that money to develop new resources; the Val Ogden Center, a clubhouse for the mentally ill, will get a staff assistant; the Arthur D. Curtis Children's Justice Center will get money for a child abuse prevention campaign; Loaves and Fishes will use the money to continue its Meals-on-Wheels program; and Vancouver-Clark Parks and Recreation will help pay for its summer recreation program.

In addition, the Vancouver-based Parks Foundation gets \$15,000 for its recreation scholarship program; Evergreen Habitat for Humanity, \$11,890 for a volunteer coordinator; and the Washington State University Foundation, \$10,250 for an at-home summer school program.

Other winners of smaller grants: Affordable Community Environments, \$5,000; Big Brothers Big Sisters Columbia Northwest, \$7,475; Boys & Girls Clubs of Southwest Washington, \$7,500; CDM Services, \$10,000; Clark County Volunteer Lawyers program, \$3,000; Clark County Safe Kids, \$7,500; Columbia Theater for the Performing Arts, \$10,000; Deaf Education Advocates Foundation, \$10,000; Free Clinic for Southwest Washington, \$13,000; Friends of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge, \$10,000; Hough Foundation, \$7,500; Reach out and Read, \$7,500; YW Housing, \$5,831; the YWCA of Clark County, \$10,000; and Share, Inc., \$5,000.

Children's Trust Fund grants also go to the Comfort Items for Victims of Trauma Program, \$2,000; Impact Northwest, \$2,500; Infant Layettes Program, \$3,000; and the ROCKSOLID Community Teen Center, \$5,000.

Despite the sputtering economy, the Community Foundation is doing well, foundation president Richard Melching wrote in an e-mail.

"We remain strong and are doing well, considering the national economy," Melching wrote. "We are resilient due to a diverse and committed base of donors. We were born in a recession and have successfully weathered the bursting of the dot-com bubble and the recession at the beginning of this decade."

The Community Foundation has distributed nearly \$84 million since it was founded in 1984. It received nearly \$6 million in contributions in 2008, Melching said — a small decline from 2007. It's way too soon to predict whether this year will see continued decline, he said.

"Our donors often give toward the end of the calendar year, once they have a better idea of their annual income and projected taxes. So it is too early to tell how 2009 will turn out," he said.

When sister foundation SWIFT — Southwest Washington Independent Forward Thrust — closed up shop last year, it placed its remaining money in a trust at the Community Foundation.

Visit www.cfsww.org to learn more. The grant award event is at 9 a.m. today at the Hilton Vancouver Washington, 301 W. Sixth St.