
2009-2010 FIRST FRUITS

FUND GRANTS

Round One

The Vista Hermosa Foundation established the First Fruits Fund in the Summer of 2008 . . .

. . . TO ENCOURAGE COLLABORATIVE AND INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO BUILDING SELF-SUFFICIENCY FOR THE MOST UNDERSERVED IN OUR COMMUNITY, INCLUDING IMPROVED ACCESS TO SUCH BASIC NEEDS AS FOOD, HOUSING AND LIVABLE WAGES. PREFERENCE IS GIVEN TO NEW, ALTERNATIVE, NON-TRADITIONAL STRATEGIES.

The Vista Hermosa Foundation continued its support in 2009 using the same objective. In another exciting development, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation named the Blue Mountain Community Foundation a recipient of a grant that BMCF in turn added to support for the following grants.

In formulating an approach to making these grants, the Foundation defined basic needs beyond food, clothing, transportation and shelter. In addition, basic human needs¹ also include:

- Security
- Economic well-being
- A sense of belonging
- Recognition
- Control over one's life

Naturally, by only making such a few grants there are many other ideas that meet similar goals. Should a good idea be absent from this list, let it serve as an opportunity for dialogue and understanding in future grantmaking.

However, the following grants are meant to celebrate and invest in the people and programs at the cutting edge of community support across the Foundation's service area, across many domains from increasing income, improving shelter, reducing hunger, improving educational outcomes, strengthening community ties and creating opportunity for those the First Fruits Fund is designed to help.

¹ Fisher, Roger and William Ury, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981). pp. 49-50.

BLUE MOUNTAIN ACTION COUNCIL, \$10,000

ASSET BUILDING COALITION

The Asset Building Coalition (ABC) launched in October, 2008, in Walla Walla County, commissioned and funded by Washington State's Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) Agency, now the Department of Commerce. The goal of this group is to develop strategies for low-income earners to stretch their incomes for the acquisition of a significant asset, such as an emergency fund, car or home.

ABC builds upon work from 2008-2009 to ensure that all taxpayers eligible for the earned income tax credit (or other credits) apply for it.

In addition to marketing the tax credit, the second approach is to provide relevant, appropriate education in financial matters. Working with local financial institutions, ABC is implementing an effective referral training program for frontline case managers and social workers to refer clients to financial fitness programs. This outreach is designed to educate families how to budget, reconcile checkbooks, save and prepare for the acquisition of a significant asset. Efforts will strive to improve or sustain credit worthiness as families seek mortgages or other financing to acquire an asset.

ABC is sponsored by the Blue Mountain Action Council. Noah Leavitt is the project manager. Kathy Covey, BMAC Director of Community Service, leads too.

BLUE MOUNTAIN ACTION COUNCIL, \$3,300

IMPROVE FOOD DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM AND PILOT NEW EFFORT

Blue Mountain Action Council serves the region's food banks through its warehouse, staff and trucking to serve residents in Garfield, Columbia and Walla Walla Counties, even making trips to Clarkston, Washington.

At times of peak warehouse delivery and inventory, proper sorting and storage bins are at a premium. With additional specialty bins, more food can be sorted, safely stored and efficiently distributed. This grant provides for the purchase of up to six new bins.

The balance of the grant will be spent on a BMAC Food Warehouse direct-to-consumer pilot program. In this effort, backpacks will be stocked with nutritious, free food for delivery on Fridays at Lincoln Alternative High School. Backpacks will be returned on Monday and replenished for the following weekend. In this way, students who receive nutritious meals at school through the free and reduced lunch program continue to have a food source during out-of-school time.

BLUE MOUNTAIN YOUNG LIFE, \$5,000

YOUNG LIVES PROGRAM

In 2009, Blue Mountain Young Life launched a new effort to reach teen mothers. Called “Young Lives,” participating moms meet weekly in a social environment that connects participants to others and allows for relationship building and sharing experiences. In addition, each mom has a one-on-one relationship with a mentor mom, plus an additional caregiver for her child. Each week, mothers know they can rely on a time of respite and care.

The program year is capped by a week-long excursion to a family camp for mother and child, plus her mentor and childcare provider.

CATHOLIC CHARITIES (WALLA WALLA OFFICE), \$9,000

REFUGEE & IMMIGRATION ASSISTANCE

This grant provides Catholic Charities of Spokane’s Refugee & Immigration Services the opportunity to expand services from the Chancery at St. Patrick’s Parish in Walla Walla from 12 hours to 15 hours per week. This increase in hours further expands the case manager’s capacity to serve families, increasing from just four hours per week two years ago. In terms of clients served, the case manager will eventually help a caseload of 60 unduplicated clients, up from 18 in 2007.

Catholic Charities of Spokane's Immigration Services strives to provide low-cost, quality services, referrals and resources for low-income immigrants. Clients are helped with adjustment of status, naturalization/petition for alien relatives and other aid. Efforts are focused on following legal pathways to keep families together and reunite family members who are separated.

Families served are very poor and have few resources. The majority of immigration clients in southeastern Washington are from Mexico and other Latin American countries. The program works to help them gain the legal status they want and need so they can work and contribute in a positive way to the community. The program seeks to strengthen families by keeping them together—preventing deportation, securing permanent resident status or reuniting members. Furthermore, immigration benefits bring security, economic opportunities for employment and education, as well as stability to the local community.

COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY, \$30,000

GENERAL OPERATING SUPPORT AND LEADERSHIP INITIATIVES

Commitment to Community (C2C) is a coalition of public and private service providers focused on working alongside neighborhood residents in a grassroots manner. In this way, residents take ownership and address their own issues.

It is sponsored by BMAC, supported with Sherwood Trust funds and managed with staff support from the Community Network. C2C staff consists of two full-time outreach coordinators who work with four teams (Neighborhood, Resource, Policy and Information) under the guidance of a Steering Committee that meets monthly. After three years of operation, it is working alongside residents in three neighborhoods: Jefferson Park, Washington Park and Edith/Carrie Streets. C2C is designed to serve any neighborhood in the Walla Walla area.

C2C is in its third year working to empower neighbors to take ownership in building a healthier neighborhood and community. Creating relationships of trust among neighbors takes time, but it is this sense of ownership and cohesion that develops the capacity to identify and solve their own problems.

Building a healthy community and economy begins *from within*, through investing in people and neighborhoods. Research shows that significant community development occurs only when local residents have a sense of ownership and are committed to “*investing*” themselves and their resources in the effort.

As a result, investing in *the C2C process*—empowering residents to solve their own problems based on an understanding of their neighborhood assets, capacities and abilities, rather than on their needs—is the most effective vehicle to influence civic change.

This grant has two purposes. First, one-half is for general operating support to assist with the day-to-day expenses of neighborhood outreach and the bilingual outreach workers efforts to meet people where they are.

The other half supports leadership initiatives of the C2C Outreach and the Community Network Coordinators, who will jointly determine appropriate expenditure of initiative funds. Funds will address neighborhood capacity development projects. In general, Coordinators would prioritize start-up or seed funds to support work that addresses the three core areas of C2C outcomes: neighborhood pride and image, safety and security, and civic engagement. These outcomes are developed from three areas of outreach focus: establishing trust, identifying skills and changing perceptions about neighborhoods. C2C focuses its qualitative and quantitative reporting on these three outcomes.

For example, a 2008 grant supported the return of Donna Beegle, an expert on helping communities understand poverty. She was the keynote for the 2008 Children’s Forum and delivered understanding about the context for families in poverty and strategies to support pathways out of generational poverty.

Underwriting Beegle’s return developed into the 2009 Opportunity Conference, an opportunity for local residents who live in poverty to connect to a Navigator. A Navigator is someone who is willing to connect a person to the community’s resources and find a way to self-sufficiency. Absent these undesignated, leadership funds, the conference would not have occurred—one of only four hosted in the United States.

C2C provides a unique investment opportunity to continue revitalizing neighborhoods in a comprehensive, collaborative and grassroots manner. Funding community infrastructure in the form of a collaborative process is most likely to see it affecting change in community-wide solutions, particularly given the interconnectedness of community issues that create healthy communities.

HELPLINE, \$8,000

TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE

Helpline is a primary screening and referral agency in the Walla Walla Valley for emergency social services. It assesses the needs of individuals and families in crisis and assists them through direct services and advocacy, maximizing the use of non-duplicated community resources and education for long-term self help.

Among its many services, Helpline acts as a ticket agent for Valley Transit, the Walla Walla Public Transportation System. State and Federal policy changes have add significant impacts on the budget of Valley Transit and, in turn, its service delivery. Further, Valley Transit increased its bus fares to offset some losses in other revenue categories.

Many of Helpline's clients use the public transportation system as a mode to get to and from work or to carry out household business. It is the primary mode of transportation.

Helpline has a special program of offering bus passes in certain circumstances. For example, homeless women housed at the STEP shelter are provided a bus pass to go to the Christian Aid Center for breakfast and dinner. Bus passes are also given to Helpline clients who have a scheduled job interview.

This grant will enable Helpline to sustain and enhance the access it provides clients to Valley Transit.

LINCOLN ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL, \$20,000

GENERAL SUPPORT AT THE DISCRETION OF THE PRINCIPAL

This grant is given to Principal Jim Sporleder to continue his work to support student programs and activities that encourage students to connect with Lincoln High School and to foster positive adult relationships. It is Jim's experience and belief that students who form positive adult relationships with their teachers are more likely to be successful in school and develop loyalty, school spirit and take appropriate steps to graduation.

PLEASANT VIEW ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL, \$4,000

GENERAL SUPPORT AT THE DISCRETION OF THE LEAD TEACHER

Funds support the ongoing effort of Lead Teacher, Brian Gabbard, to engage students in leadership activities and the community. With an enrollment of nearly 100 students, the school has no Parent Teacher Association and no Associated Student Body. As a result, there are limited "community-building" opportunities or fundraising chances that these common school institutions normally offer.

RISING SUN CLUBHOUSE, \$10,000

GENERAL SUPPORT

The Rising Sun Clubhouse plays a vital role in providing support and care for the chronically mentally ill. Its mission fully describes its work: The Clubhouse is pursuing the criteria established to be a certified International Clubhouse. Currently, the Clubhouse provides a supportive place reflecting the clubhouse model of social rehabilitation. This model provides opportunities that empower members with mental illness to reach their full and considerable potential while rediscovering their self-respect, dignity and abilities.

To accomplish its mission, many opportunities are provided for Clubhouse members to perform productive work, create meaningful relationships and to belong to a community. There is a “generalist” staff that oversees morning meetings, insures chores are completed, develops engaging programs and activities and assists members in care of the Clubhouse. Outreach is done to find employment opportunities for members. The Clubhouse also fosters relationships between members and agencies that provide services for the mentally ill, such as the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

RURAL GREEN YOUTH ENTERPRISE, \$5,000

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Rural Green Youth Enterprise is a new initiative formed by citizens and community leaders of the cities of Waitsburg, Walla Walla, Dayton, Prescott, Starbuck and Pomeroy. It started out of a conviction that a need exists for a comprehensive, regional approach for economic development for youth centered around *Green Technology* and *Community-Supported Agriculture*.

As a start-up organization, Rural Green’s immediate objective is to grow its home office in Waitsburg, in which low start-up cost sustainable youth-run enterprises are embedded, and then promote these enterprises.

Longer-range goals are twofold: The first goal is to provide regional youth with comprehensive education and training opportunities in sustainable green technologies and community-supported agriculture. The second goal is to establish youth-operated green technology and community-supported agricultural businesses throughout the region, which will support and promote the enterprise and provide all youth with the opportunity to experience running their own businesses.

STUDENT HEALTH OPTIONS, \$12,000

LICENSED COUNSELING SERVICES AT THE LINCOLN HEALTH CENTER

Student Health Options has grown in the past year from a passion of several community members convicted that the community could and should do a better job regarding the health and welfare of students. These community members created a nonprofit corporation, called Student Health

Options. In collaboration with many community forces, Student Health Options' vision is to operate a school-linked health center for all the students at Lincoln Alternative High School in a professional, convenient and accessible manner. In summary, it means more students getting more of the care they need in an environment that is more accessible and less costly to provide.

As part of a full complement of health services, Student Health Options will offer access to mental health counselors. This grant underwrites two to three licensed counselors working at the Lincoln Health Center for 12 hours a week to meet students on both a drop-in and appointment basis. The plan is to use experienced counselors who are well-versed in adolescent care. Emphasis is placed on case management and follow through with students and parents. Licensed counselors allow students the opportunity to seek help while at school and, hopefully, handle issues before they become more severe.

The Lincoln Health Center provides a confidential, safe environment for students to discuss their problems and concerns. The Center's health professionals help students sort through their feelings, deal with mental health and substance-abuse issues and develop plans to resolve their problems. Counselors facilitate student communication with parents, other family members, students, as well as school staff, and make referrals as appropriate.

STUDENT HEALTH OPTIONS, \$4,000

OPEN & CLOSED GROUPS AT THE LINCOLN HEALTH CENTER

This grant supports open and closed counseling groups for Lincoln students. The plan is to offer one or two meetings each week. Groups allow a counselor to work with more students with the addition of group dynamics. These dynamics help students listen to other students express their concerns in a less threatening and structured environment. The Mental Health Planning Subcommittee, led by Michelle Coleman, desires both open and closed groups and has agreed that demand will dictate which programs are offered.

The open group consists of either all girls or all boys touching upon general topics, such as handling relationships, addressing conflicts or making healthy choices. An open group would meet weekly for 60 to 90 minute discussions led by a licensed health counselor and an additional co-facilitator. The groups would meet in the center next to the school.

Many options exist for closed groups. The direction of small, closed groups depends on the situation, as identified by a licensed, experienced counselor. Groups would be led by at least two facilitators and would have a set start and end date, running on an eight week cycle. One identified need is for nutrition counseling in both male and female groups. Groups like these provide an excellent opportunity to collaborate with a medical doctor, a nutritionist and a mental health counselor to address the multifaceted components of an area such as eating disorders. Anger management is another curriculum-based program that would be beneficial to many of the adolescents at Lincoln. Sexual assault, working moms are examples of other topics for consideration at a group session.

WALLA WALLA COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY, \$15,000

ORGANIZATIONAL PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

The Walla Walla County Housing Authority (WWCHA) operates the Walla Walla Farm Labor Homes under the authority of the Walla Walla County Commissioners. There is a five-person Board of Directors and a Facility Manager.

This grant underwrites consulting services and support to WWCHA in areas such as governance, strategic planning and facilitation of joint meetings with the Walla Walla Housing Authority (WWHA) in support of a recently signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). These activities will provide the WWCHA with the clarity of mission and activities to move ahead and remain a powerful service provider.

Working with the Board of Directors to assess organizational strengths and liabilities, an organizational development expert will help WWCHA define its success more clearly, manage the organization more efficiently, and provide services to their clients more effectively. As a product of this investment, WWCHA would likely have an organizational assessment, a review of Board governance and a newly created strategic plan along with benchmarking of comparable organizations.

In the long run, a highly effective Board of Directors with a focused plan has the capacity to better serve the hundreds of families that live in Farm Labor Homes, but also hold the potential of serving more of Walla Walla County.

SHERWOOD LEADERSHIP CLASS, \$7,500

PLAY & LEARN CENTER AT THE CENTER AT THE PARK

The Sherwood Leadership Class will provide children of working parents and their caregivers an opportunity for a safe, community-based place to learn and play. In conjunction with the Walla Walla Center at the Park, the Early Learning Coalition and Commitment to Community, the Sherwood Leadership Class is developing a kid-friendly space located in the Center next to Walla Walla's Jefferson Park.

The grant, matched by funds from the Sherwood Trust, will underwrite the costs to renovate and remodel a 750 square foot room furnished with developmentally appropriate materials. The goal for children who use the room is that the environment will provide them and their caregivers with the resources they need to be school ready. In addition, this "Play & Learn Center" functions alongside the many programs serving Walla Walla's senior population, offering opportunities for the young and the young-at-heart to intermingle and build relationships.

YWCA, \$5,000

SPECIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE MARIPOSA PROGRAM

Spanish for butterfly, the Mariposa program continues to help young girls grow strong wings for their futures. Mariposa was created to help girls develop skills necessary to succeed in school and avoid early pregnancy. The program meets weekly in two-hour sessions. Each week, the group addresses topics that include sexual harassment, dating, career options, education planning, substance abuse, body image, family violence, cultural pride and women's roles. Activities have included field trips to colleges and workplaces, community service organizations and mentoring projects. Participants have also had the opportunity reach out to younger students and siblings.

During 2007-2008 a total of 98 girls participated in Mariposa. These participants were fifth graders at Blue Ridge and Green Park Elementary Schools and sixth and seventh graders at Garrison and Pioneer Middle Schools. Beginning with the 2008-2009 school year, Mariposa began offerings to ninth graders at Walla Walla High School. A recent study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that Hispanic high school students use drugs and attempt suicide more frequently than their black and white counterparts and that, while the rate of sexual activity has declined in other groups, it has shown no decrease in Hispanic high school students (*Walla Walla Union-Bulletin*, June 6, 2008)—information that supports the need for Mariposa in a high school setting.

This grant provides for program growth beyond its current scope and reach. The grant is sufficiently broad to allow for special opportunities to reach young women in new and creative ways. For example, a special opportunity was given to willing and able Mariposas to experience an outdoor adventure with hiking, camping and swimming. Girls travelled on the excursion by air, the first flight for each of them.

SUMMARY OF GRANTS

| Grantee | Program Description | Amount |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Blue Mountain Action Council | Asset Building Coalition | \$10,000 |
| Blue Mountain Action Council | Improve Food Distribution and Pilot a Direct-to-Consumer “Backpack” Program | 3,300 |
| Blue Mountain Young Life | Young Lives Program | \$5,000 |
| Catholic Charities | Refugee and Immigration Assistance | \$9,000 |
| Commitment to Community Helpline | General Support and Leadership Initiatives | \$30,000 |
| Lincoln Alternative High School | Transportation Assistance | \$8,000 |
| Pleasant View High School | Discretionary Support for the Principal | \$20,000 |
| Rising Sun Clubhouse | Discretionary Support for the Lead Teacher | \$4,000 |
| Rural Green Youth Enterprise | General Support | \$10,000 |
| Student Health Options | Program Development | \$5,000 |
| Student Health Options | Licensed Counseling Services at the Lincoln Health Center | \$12,000 |
| Student Health Options | Open & Closed Groups at the Lincoln Health Center | \$4,000 |
| Walla Walla County Housing Authority | Organizational Planning and Development | \$15,000 |
| Sherwood Leadership Class | Play and Learn Center at the Park | \$7,500 |
| YWCA | Special Opportunities for the Mariposa Program | \$5,000 |
| | ***Total | \$147,800 |