

Recession Response Fund Reaches \$1 Million

71 Grants totaling \$437,555 Announced

(December 1, 2009) — The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina is pleased to announce that more than \$1 million has been raised for the regional Recession Response Fund. With the announcement of the latest round of grants, more than \$1 million has been distributed to nonprofits across Western North Carolina.

Moving quickly as the foreclosure crisis and unprecedented unemployment shook the economy, the Recession Response Fund effort was launched in January. The fund was seeded with \$250,000 from the Foundation's permanent endowments. Working with partners such as the Cherokee Preservation Foundation, our affiliate funds and other foundations, and with the support of generous members of our community, we have met our goal.

“Meeting the goal is a wonderful thing, however, we are very aware that people continue to struggle,” said Elizabeth Brazas, the Foundation's president. “Unemployment is high and foreclosures continue to cause turmoil for families. This latest round of grants is our largest to date, and 71 nonprofits will receive important support. The Foundation was able to move quickly to help, and we are grateful we could organize this effort that is helping people across the region.”

No fees were charged, and every dollar of the Recession Response Fund will be granted for emergency assistance before the end of the year. Grants were made primarily for operating support, enabling organizations to focus on service delivery.

More than one quarter of the Recession Response Fund was used to address the needs of hungry families including two grants to MANNA FoodBank, support to 41 food pantries to purchase food, funds to nine organizations to purchase freezers and refrigerators and, literally, thousands of meals delivered to our neighbors in the form of food boxes, home delivered meals and backpacks of food sent home with children on the weekends. Community gardens emerged as an important resource, and eight different nonprofits received funding so that communities can grow their own produce to share with people in need.

Approximately one-fifth of the Recession Response Fund grants went to organizations providing emergency assistance for heat, utilities and rent. Nonprofits reported a dramatic increase in first-time applicants and revealed that many former donors had become clients. The financial stress contributed to an increase in domestic violence cases and shelters in ten Western North Carolina counties received grants. Five shelters serving the homeless also received support; in one case allowing a new shelter to open to serve increasing demand.

Major support was also provided for community-based health clinics, prescription assistance and mental health counseling. Seven different organizations received grants designed to help people find and keep jobs. OnTrack Financial Education & Counseling and Pisgah Legal Services are on the front-line of the region's foreclosure crisis. These agencies, with others, provided legal and financial counseling to thousands of families helping more than 98% of their clients avoid foreclosure. A list of the current Recession Response Fund grants is attached; a complete list of all Recession Response Fund grants can be found on the Foundation's website.

The Recession Response Fund is a powerful example of the way The Community Foundation brings its resources to bear on issues facing Western North Carolina. By moving quickly to assess community need, leverage resources, share expertise and work with our partners and donors, we served the region effectively. Throughout the year, the Foundation has witnessed the willingness of our communities to address needs as seen in the abundant acts of grace, kindness and assistance that have been made possible by generous donors and provided by hardworking nonprofits to clients. The contributions of many have strengthened our community and helped our neighbors.

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