

Woods Charitable Fund Responds to Economic Climate

Nonprofits have been hit hard by the current economic recession. Corporate giving is down and many foundations nationwide have lost 30% or more of their assets. Nonprofits throughout the local community have faced staff layoffs, office relocations, and are implementing creative strategies to do more with less.



Lincoln Literacy Council (LLC) Executive Director Clay Naff said, "In 2009 we foresaw a lot of difficulties in the second half of the year. Our board authorized a cost reduction plan, and we were able to save money through partnering projects with ethnic and community centers." Clay said LLC will end the year in good shape but is facing uncertainty for 2010. "Grant dollars are our main source of income and it is much more difficult now to secure those dollars. (Grant-seeking) has become fiercely competitive." On a positive note, LLC's donors have rallied behind the organization—it is ahead of budget for individual contributions in 2009.

At the same time that nonprofits are tightening their belts and cutting services, the community needs are greater with higher levels of unemployment and home foreclosures.

Sheila Schlisner is the Executive Director of the Good Neighbor Community Center, which provides basic and emergency items like food and clothing. Sheila reported the Center recently laid off three part-time staff, in addition to cutting existing staff hours. All the while, it has distributed 150,000 more pounds of food to 600 more families than at this time last year.



As Woods Charitable Fund does not rely on public funds for its grant-making, its endowment depends on the market's performance. In 2008, the Fund's assets experienced a significant decline. Later that year at its November meeting, the Fund's Board of Directors unanimously voted to sustain its dollar amount of grant-making for 2009, in spite of the downturn.

In March 2009, WCF Executive Director Pam Baker stated in a letter to grantees and potential applicants, "While keenly aware that (the Board's) decision will take the total percentage of giving significantly higher than 5% this year, they believed it was important to do so in light of the economic need in Lincoln." ♦

*"How wonderful it is that nobody needs to wait a single moment before starting to improve the world."
- Anne Frank*

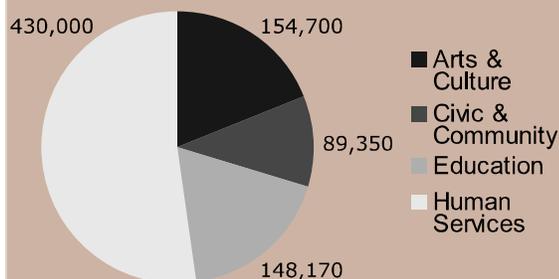
Kathleen Rutledge Joins Board

The Fund welcomes Kathleen Rutledge as its newest board member. Kathleen retired as Editor of the Lincoln Journal Star newspaper in 2007. Prior to serving as Editor, she spent thirty years with the newspaper in various writing and editing roles. With that experience, she brings to the board unique insights into the community's strengths and needs. Kathleen was elected last November to serve a six-year term. ♦



2009 Grant-making At A Glance

Grants paid to date in 2009: \$822,220



Grant cycles completed: 2 of 3

Number of applications pending decision in November 2009: 22

Average number of proposals reviewed per grant cycle: 21

Number of grants awarded to date: 39

Average size of grant award: \$21,658

Smallest grant awarded: \$1,500

Largest single-year grant awarded: \$95,000

Total dollar amount of grants approved: \$844,660

WCF Board Approves New Organizational Purpose and Philosophy Statement

In June, Woods Charitable Fund's Board of Directors approved for the organization a redrafted purpose and philosophy statement to more concisely and clearly reflect the motivation behind the Fund's grant-making work. This replaced the past purpose and philosophy statement created and approved in 1994 near the time of its departure from Woods Fund of Chicago. ♦

OUR PURPOSE

To improve the quality of life in Lincoln, Nebraska by

- Expanding prosperity and justice
- Advancing diverse and balanced participation of community residents
- Stimulating creativity and ingenuity.

OUR VISION

A community that offers a promising future for all, where everyone has the opportunity to participate and thrive

AREAS SUPPORTED

To advance its purpose, the Fund makes grants and loans in four primary categories:

- Human Services
- Arts & Culture
- Education
- Civic & Community

PHILOSOPHY / CORE VALUES

Woods Charitable Fund's grant-making reflects its cornerstone values:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <u>Participation</u> | Every person deserves dignity, respect and an opportunity to participate. |
| <u>Empowerment</u> | Empowerment means that individuals must determine their own agendas for change rather than having one imposed on them. |
| <u>Diversity</u> | Diversity enhances and strengthens communities. |
| <u>Change</u> | Programs, services and institutions can profoundly impact and improve people's lives – and all systems can benefit from continuous efforts to assess and improve their relevance and benefit those they serve. |
| <u>Integrity</u> | The Fund and other trusted community partners operate with integrity, mutuality and transparency. |

Woods Charitable Fund's grant program is broad in outlook, supporting direct service, organizational capacity building and projects exploring policy options in the public interest, which may result in long-term solutions to conditions affecting our community.

WCF Offers New Online Grant System



This summer, Woods Charitable Fund launched a new web-based grant application, reporting and grants management system.

Beginning with its July 1st grant application submission, Woods began accepting all applications in the new online format. The web-based format was created to offer a greener, paperless process and added accessibility to applicants who can now apply, save and submit from any computer location at any time of day. The application and reporting forms remain consistent with the written content of the Lincoln/Lancaster County Grantmakers Common Application Form.

An anonymous online survey conducted with 20 applicants following the first web-based application cycle demonstrated overwhelming favor (90%) for a web-based (as opposed to paper-based) application process. Most (90%) also ranked the experience as very easy or mostly easy, and more than half had never used a web-based application system prior to the experience.

The following comments were submitted in the survey:

"I didn't have a lot of paperwork cluttering my desk!"

"It was easy, convenient and user-friendly."

"I think it helped me be more concise and efficient with my words."

"It saved us money (postage and time)."

Spotlight on Past WCF Director, Marie Fischer (1992-96)



Marie Fischer retired from the WCF board in December 1996. She began her service in 1992 after retiring from the University of Nebraska and then working as a trainer for the Grantsmanship Center. Marie contributed to the board extensive experience in community planning, fund development, social welfare and education. Grants totaling over \$3.2 million were awarded during her tenure.

What aspects of serving on the WCF board surprised you? The exceptional dedication of the board and staff; the thoroughness of staff research prior to presenting proposals to the board; the focused but broad range of proposals considered by WCF; the knowledge, insight and wisdom of board members; and the willingness of board members to engage in a frank exchange of ideas; all of which results in the significant contribution WCF makes to our community.

What are you involved with or interested in today? I am especially interested in multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-racial experiences as a way to learn and to understand and value others as we work together toward a society motivated by love, peace and justice. Marilyn Johnson-Farr and I served on the WCF board together. One day we had a conversation about Sunday mornings being racially segregated. We decided to ask a small group of women from Quinn Chapel (African American) and Eastridge Presbyterian Church (primarily Caucasian) to meet together to learn to be friends. At first we were quite careful in how we approached each other. That was thirteen years ago. Now we are relaxed. At our meetings we have refreshments and laugh and visit, then one member presents a program about a famous woman, and we close with a prayer circle. Our group is called FRIENDS and that is what we have come to be.