

October 29, 2009

**New Grants Will Support Washingtonians Hit Hardest By the Recession**  
*More than \$4 million in funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will help connect people to public benefits, employment resources, and legal aid*

SEATTLE – A dozen local nonprofit organizations and their partners will be able to assist a growing number of Washington’s most vulnerable families that are feeling the impact of the ongoing economic downturn.

Today, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation announced more than \$4 million in new funding that will help 10 community foundations, the Washington State Library, and the Legal Aid for Washington Fund (LAW Fund) increase assistance for Washingtonians facing economic hardship. The grants will provide greater resources for residents as they look for work or seek support for basic needs, including food and family programs. Funds will also help to provide legal services for low-income families who face increasing economic hardship or unsafe living conditions.

“The recession has affected thousands of families in our state, and many need a hand as they work toward economic recovery and stability,” said William H. Gates Sr., co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. “At the same time, many of Washington’s community support organizations are stretched thin by meeting a growing demand for services at a time when it’s difficult to raise funds. We are pleased to help our partners increase and enhance their invaluable work during these challenging times.”

The new grants will support the following organizations:

- **Community Foundations:** \$672,000 to 10 community foundations to help connect families to existing public benefits and assistance, and support programs that prevent and reduce domestic violence and alleviate hunger. These grants will leverage \$405,000 in local, private matching support. Community foundations play a critical social service role throughout Washington by responding to the immediate and unique needs of each local community.
- **Washington State Library:** \$400,000 to the Washington State Library for its Renew Washington Grant Program, which will help 17 public libraries across the state offer new or enhanced services to help people looking for work and others impacted by the downturn in the economy. Over the last year, Washingtonians have flocked to libraries for information, assistance, and resources that can help them recover from economic challenges. The foundation’s investment is helping to leverage \$400,000 in federal support that was allotted from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.
- **Legal Aid for Washington Fund (LAW Fund):** \$3 million over three years to help ensure Washington state residents have equitable access to legal support through a network of 26 nonprofit law centers across the state. More than 80 percent of low-income households in Washington require—but cannot afford—legal assistance to resolve an urgent civil legal problem that is a barrier to their economic stability, such as a foreclosure or eviction, domestic violence, or access to essential government services.

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Washington communities have been hit hard by the economic downturn. Unemployment is currently above 9 percent, and over the last year more than 117,000 Washington residents have

lost their jobs. The number of bankruptcies in the state is now at a four-year high—a nearly 50 percent increase over the same time last year—and foreclosure rates are above the national average. An increasing number of families, some unaccustomed to new financial challenges, struggle to find the local information and services they need to stabilize their lives.

“Public libraries in Washington state are lifelines to information, technology, and human assistance for countless families—in good times and in bad,” said Jan Walsh, Washington state librarian. “This grant will help local libraries significantly expand services like resume-writing classes or assistance with job searches, which are in higher demand when communities face a tough economic climate.”

The foundation grants announced today will also help support families facing an increasingly critical but often unattainable service—professional legal assistance.

“The availability of civil legal aid is a critically important factor in helping families and communities maintain stability during times of great stress and adversity,” said Karen Falkingham, director of the LAW Fund and The Campaign for Equal Justice. “With our grant from the Gates Foundation we can meet the urgent legal needs of our most vulnerable residents during this difficult time and help safeguard our state’s extraordinary legal aid system for years to come.”

Since its inception, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has invested more than \$3 billion in Washington state, including support for programs to reduce family homelessness; provide greater opportunities for students to [start kindergarten ready to learn](#), graduate from [high school](#), and earn a [postsecondary \(college\) degree](#); ensure that [libraries](#) maintain quality access to technology; and help [at-risk families, children, and communities](#). For more information, visit [www.gatesfoundation.org/washington](http://www.gatesfoundation.org/washington).

For broadcast-quality footage, high-resolution still photography, and information about the foundation’s work, please visit: [www.gatesfoundation.org/press-room/Pages/news-market.aspx](http://www.gatesfoundation.org/press-room/Pages/news-market.aspx).

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### **[Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#)**

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people’s health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Jeff Raikes and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.

## Grant Summaries:

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### Community Foundations

Following are the 10 community foundations receiving grants:

- **Blue Mountain Community Foundation** (\$60,000) serves Columbia, Garfield, and Walla Walla counties and plans to award grant funds to projects and programs that encourage collaborative and innovative approaches to improving access to basic needs such as food, housing, and livable wages. (Lawson Knight, executive director, 509-386-1295, [www.bluemountainfoundation.org](http://www.bluemountainfoundation.org))
- **Community Foundation of North Central Washington (CFNCW)** (\$75,000) serves the citizens of Chelan, Douglas, and Okanogan counties. CFNCW will use its grant funds to support the nonprofit organizations in North Central Washington with the Gates Great Giving Match (G3M), a program aimed at engaging new and existing donors to participate in philanthropy and modeled after a program used successfully in several other states. (Beth Stipe, executive director, 509-663-7716, [www.cfncw.org](http://www.cfncw.org))
- **Community Foundation for Southwest Washington** (\$75,000), with current assets of over \$43 million, is currently celebrating its 25th anniversary of serving southwest Washington communities. Grant funding will address the significant increase in demand for local food bank services by supporting current, and creating new, food distribution systems in rural areas of southwest Washington. (Anne Digenis, program officer, 360-694-2550, [www.cfsww.org](http://www.cfsww.org))
- **Grays Harbor Community Foundation** (\$45,000) has supported other nonprofits in Grays Harbor for 15 years, giving \$824,000 to more than 50 organizations in 2008. The Foundation will use its grant funds to provide additional support to four food banks, its countywide Senior Nutrition Program, and Coastal Harvest (a distribution center that serves 42 food banks in five counties). More than 750 families and 3,000 seniors will be provided nutritious food. (Jim Daly, executive director, 360-532-1600, [www.gh-cf.org](http://www.gh-cf.org))
- **Inland Northwest Community Foundation** (\$150,000) will award two regional grant programs: one serving Spokane County and one serving the tri-county region of Ferry, Stevens, and Pend Oreille counties. Grants will be awarded to organizations that demonstrate a proven record of building strong families and strengthening communities. (Sarah Bain, marketing and communications associate, 509-951-0627, [www.inwcf.org](http://www.inwcf.org))
- **Orcas Island Community Foundation** (\$30,000) works to foster philanthropy and encourage contribution within San Juan County. Grant funding will support four programs aimed at connecting children and families to services and programs providing nutritional and educational support. The specific organizations that will benefit include Readiness to Learn, Kaleidoscope, Orcas Family Connections, and Farm to Cafeteria. (Hilary Canty, executive director, 360-376-6423, [www.oicf.us](http://www.oicf.us))
- **Skagit Community Foundation** (\$30,000) will use grant funds to help nonprofit organizations in Skagit County respond to community needs. The community foundation will support efforts to increase access to public benefits, prevent and reduce violence, strengthen food distribution systems, and build strong families and communities. (John White, president, 360-419-3181, [www.skagitcf.org](http://www.skagitcf.org))

- **Three Rivers Community Foundation** (\$57,000) receives and distributes funds in Benton and Franklin counties with the goal of building a stronger community and investing in the diverse capacities of individuals, organizations, and neighborhoods. Grant funds will be available and distributed to organizations that are successful candidates in the areas of reducing and preventing violence, community building, and fighting hunger. (Carrie A. Green, executive director, 509-735-5559, [www.3rcf.org](http://www.3rcf.org))
- **Whatcom Community Foundation** (\$75,000) serves residents in Whatcom County, and will utilize this funding to offer a competitive grant process, which will begin this year. To promote and explain the grant opportunities, WCF will host several orientation meetings for local organizations in the coming weeks. (Mauri Ingram, president and CEO, 360-739-8039, [www.whatcomcf.org](http://www.whatcomcf.org))
- **Yakima Valley Community Foundation** (\$75,000) seeks to improve the Yakima Valley region's quality of life. The grant will help the Union Gospel Mission strengthen its local food distribution system and support a partnership between organizations aimed at preventing and reducing gang-related violence and building strong families, including Nuestra Casa, Comprehensive Mental Health's Strong Families (Familias Fuertes) program, and Sunnyside's Promise. (John P. Colgan, president, 509-457-7616, [www.yvcf.com](http://www.yvcf.com))

**Washington State Library** (\$400,000 over one year)—a division of the Office of the Secretary of State—collects, preserves, and makes government materials accessible; and provides services to all libraries in the state of Washington. Through this grant, the library will work with 17 public libraries to enhance services to help patrons find and use job and career resources, locate and apply for job opportunities, learn new skills and connect with educational opportunities, and practice job seeking skills like resume building and interviewing techniques. (Jan Walsh, state librarian, 360-951-6524, [www.secstate.wa.gov/library](http://www.secstate.wa.gov/library))

**The Legal Aid for Washington Fund (LAW Fund)** (\$3 million over three years) to help ensure low-income Washingtonians have equitable access to legal support through a network of 26 legal aid programs across the state. More than 80 percent of low-income households in Washington require—but cannot afford—legal assistance to resolve an urgent civil legal problem that is a barrier to their economic stability, such as a foreclosure or eviction, domestic violence, or access to essential government services. (Karen Falkingham, executive director, 206-957-6284, [www.c4ej.org](http://www.c4ej.org))