



For Immediate Release

May 30, 2023

Contact:

Kim Yeasir

THRIVE Communities, Chief Empowerment Officer
(O) 978-483-0211 (C: call/text) 617-642-4553

Development@ThriveMA.org

Contact:

Alison Harding

Cummings Foundation

781-932-7093

aeh@cummings.com

THRIVE Communities awarded 10-year Cummings Foundation grant

Lowell-based nonprofit is granted \$300,000 over 10 years from Cummings Foundation to continue vital community-centered reentry support for adults transitioning from incarceration.

Lowell, MA – THRIVE Communities is one of 150 local nonprofits that will share in \$30 million through Cummings Foundation’s major annual grants program. The Lowell-based organization was selected from a total of 630 applicants during a competitive review process. It will receive \$300,000 over ten years (\$30k/year).

THRIVE’s mission is to empower communities to welcome and support our neighbors transitioning from incarceration. Through this mission, THRIVE empowers adults returning from incarceration and is revolutionizing the options community members have to support returning neighbors during their transition. Together we work to interrupt cycles of incarceration, isolation, and social harm through community-centered restorative practices.

“What a timely affirmation!” said Kim Yeasir, Co-Founder and Chief Empowerment Officer of THRIVE Communities. “This is our seventh year offering services in Greater Lowell. It has been an honor to see THRIVE grow from an idea, to a start-up, to a community comprised of over 150 returning citizens, more than 70 volunteers, and 300+ enthusiastic supporters! Over the past 12 months, just like so many of the people we support, THRIVE has been hustling to keep the lights on, all the while serving more returning citizens per month than ever before in the lifetime of the organization. As we let the community know that THRIVE has been facing financial difficulties related to growing out of some traditional funding sources, Lowell has shown up for us in huge ways! Our community members and partners have made it clear that we are supported and wanted in this community. Thank you Center for Hope and Healing, Community Teamwork Inc., Greater Lowell Community Foundation, MassHire, Living Waters, Lowell House ATR, Christ Church United, UTEC, and all of our community members and partners for the many ways you have helped us get through this challenging moment in the life of our organization. We are definitely feeling the love! This 10-year Cummings Foundation grant comes at a vital time and is a clear statement that this E-For-All start-up, with the support of community,

will be standing strong for another decade! While we have a long way to go to secure systemic change, we celebrate the journey today! Thank you Lowell, thank you THRIVE Community members, and thank you Cummings Foundation!”

Through the lens of reentry, THRIVE members and volunteers collectively build the capacity and agency to advance social change one person at a time, with the intent to build the local foundation for lasting systemic change to address the intersecting harms of poverty, racism, and the criminal legal system. The Cummings award will enable THRIVE to engage, train, and compensate local community members to become circle keepers for THRIVE’s Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA), and support part of the salary of a THRIVE Communities Reentry Coach.

CoSA is an evidence-based restorative justice and reentry initiative that is practiced in many communities around the world. CoSA are made up of trained community volunteers and a Core Member (returning citizen/neighbor). Each CoSA team meets weekly to support the Core Member through the transition from prison to the community. A THRIVE Reentry Coach helps teams navigate community resources, and the Circle volunteers provide support and practical transitional assistance outside weekly Circle meetings (e.g., coffee, shopping, getting to a job interview). The team is fortified with concentric circles of support including the Core Member’s family, professionals involved in their reentry, and community groups. These layers of community join together to strengthen the resilience of Core Members—helping individuals uphold reentry requirements and achieve their goals, while providing a space for supportive forms of accountability. CoSA has been found to improve social support and reduce rates of recidivism (return to prison) among Core Members. THRIVE has launched 32 CoSA to date. With the sustaining support of Cummings Foundation, THRIVE will launch 100 more CoSA, empower over 340 returning citizens through reentry coaching, and meaningfully engage up to 300 community members in a restorative reentry experience!

The Cummings \$30 Million Grant Program primarily supports Massachusetts nonprofits that are based in and serve Middlesex, Essex, and Suffolk counties.

Through this place-based initiative, Cummings Foundation aims to give back in the areas where it owns commercial property. Its buildings are all managed, at no cost to the Foundation, by its affiliate, Cummings Properties. This Woburn-based commercial real estate firm leases and manages 11 million square feet of debt-free space, the majority of which exclusively benefits the Foundation.

“The way the local nonprofit sector perseveres, steps up, and pivots to meet the shifting needs of the community is most impressive,” said Cummings Foundation executive director Joyce Vyriotes. “We are incredibly grateful for these tireless efforts to support people in the community and to increase equity and access to opportunities.”

The majority of the grant decisions were made by about 90 volunteers. They worked across a variety of committees to review and discuss the proposals and then, together, determine which requests

would be funded. Among these community volunteers were business and nonprofit leaders, mayors, college presidents, and experts in areas such as finance and DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion).

“It would not be possible for the Foundation to hire the diversity and depth of expertise and insights that our volunteers bring to the process,” said Vyriotes. “We so appreciate the substantial time and thought they dedicated toward ensuring that our democratized version of philanthropy results in equitable outcomes that will really move the needle on important issues in local communities.”

The Foundation and volunteers first identified 150 organizations to receive three-year grants of up to \$225,000 each. The winners included first-time recipients as well as nonprofits that had previously received Cummings grants. Twenty-five of this latter group of repeat recipients were then selected by a volunteer panel to have their grants elevated to 10-year awards ranging from \$300,000 to \$1 million each.

This year’s grant recipients represent a wide variety of causes, including housing and food insecurity, workforce development, immigrant services, social justice, education, and mental health services. The nonprofits are spread across 46 different cities and towns.

Cummings Foundation has now awarded \$480 million to greater Boston nonprofits. The complete list of this year’s 150 grant winners, plus nearly 1,500 previous recipients, is available at www.CummingsFoundation.org.

Also Sharing: THRIVE Communities to host Community Barbeque & Fundraiser, Friday, June 2nd

The Greater Lowell community is invited to ***Vibe with THRIVE***. This community BBQ and fundraiser is an opportunity to celebrate unity in our community as we seek to overcome cycles of incarceration together. Join the THRIVE Community for this special drop-in event on Friday, June 2, 2023 from 3:00 to 7:00 p.m. at 10 Kirk St. (canal-side) in Lowell. Together we will embody THRIVE’s mission to empower communities to welcome and support our neighbors transitioning from incarceration.

Come build community and deeper relationships with us as we increase the visibility of our community’s efforts to end cycles of incarceration and raise the necessary funds to sustain THRIVE’s vital mission to *empower communities to welcome and support our neighbors transitioning from incarceration*.

***Vibe with THRIVE* will feature:**

- BBQ: THRIVE’s own Chef Sing (of Hop Sing in Town) on the grill
- Activities: Dominoes and Corn Hole Tournaments with prizes
- Entertainment: Music, Storytelling, and Opportunities to give!

All are invited to *Vibe with THRIVE* and invest as community in this powerful mission.

About THRIVE Communities of Massachusetts

THRIVE was founded in 2015 by two formerly incarcerated men who were passionate about restorative practices and empowerment, and three community members who felt far too disconnected from the impacts of incarceration that have disproportionately impacted communities of color and low-income neighborhoods. Together they founded THRIVE with the vision of a world where wholeness and justice replace cycles of incarceration and oppression. In its first seven years of service, THRIVE has empowered over 30 returning community members through Circles of Support and Accountability, aided over 200 individuals impacted by incarceration, responsibly engaged over 70 volunteers in experiences of reentry, and built a community network with nearly 300 supporters. Empowered adults returning from incarceration and individual community members integrated into the experience of reentry work collectively to heal harm, overcome stigma, and thrive together in the community. Since the inception of these services, THRIVE has expanded its housing and employment support and is providing access to effective, equitable, and consistent mental health and substance use disorder services through key partnerships, to meet the most urgent needs of our constituency.

About Cummings Foundation

Woburn-based Cummings Foundation, Inc. was established in 1986 by Joyce and Bill Cummings of Winchester, MA and has grown to be one of the largest private foundations in New England. The Foundation directly operates its own charitable subsidiaries, including New Horizons retirement communities, in Marlborough and Woburn, and Cummings Health Sciences, LLC. Additional information is available at www.CummingsFoundation.org.

###

PHOTOS:

1. THRIVE Communities staff celebrate news of receiving a Cummings Foundation 10-year award! – TO BE ADDED
2. THRIVE staff, members, and partners take part in a restorative circle training with Transformational Prison Project <https://photos.app.goo.gl/dMGQThHNjvNXtR9b9>
3. Sing Thanousith, Director of Community Building & Kim Yeasir, CEO <https://photos.app.goo.gl/SmFQbNuNyzyUmnSe6>
4. JPG of Vibe with THRIVE, June 2nd flier <https://photos.app.goo.gl/Z7XfmdMHnN1CPdw17> helps us to be more effective in our approach by determining what our communities need.”

About Community Teamwork

Community Teamwork is a member of the National Community Action Partnership and the Community Action Network, which was born out of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. Community Teamwork is a catalyst for social change. Our driving mission is to help people help themselves with childcare, family supports, nutrition, fuel assistance, housing, skills training,

employment, financial education, and individual asset and small business development. As a Community Action Agency, a Regional Housing Agency, and a Community Development Corporation, Community Teamwork helps more than 56,000 individuals from 71 cities and towns in northeastern Massachusetts gain greater economic independence.

###