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Sheltering Arms Foundation announces 2020-21 slate of grantees, awards \$430,000 to 38 Minnesota nonprofits serving children

MINNEAPOLIS, September 16, 2020 — The Sheltering Arms Foundation today announced its 2020-21 financial support of 38 nonprofit organizations that are working hard to deliver high-quality programming to our state's most vulnerable children. Sheltering Arms will invest \$430,000 in innovative direct service programs in early childhood and out-of-school-time youth development, as well as statewide advocacy campaigns designed to improve Minnesota's policies that impact children and their families.

"This has been a year of challenge for our grantees, as the communities they serve are facing deep issues of racial injustice with the twin pandemics of Covid-19--which has an outsized impact on communities of color--and the racial reckoning following the murder of George Floyd," said Denise Mayotte, executive director of the Sheltering Arms Foundation. "Our grantees are rising to the challenge. They are redoing their programming as a result of coronavirus, and they are working with children and parents around racial injustice. For Sheltering Arms, more and more each year we are working to fund organizations that are led by the communities they serve. This has proven especially important this year, as these organizations are best able to help their communities deal with trauma through culture."

One such grantee is **Baby's Space**, an early childhood center in the Little Earth Native American housing community, located in Minneapolis. Through their program called Healing Our Children, Healing Ourselves, Baby's Space is building staff and parent capacity to provide trauma-informed and culturally responsive circles of support for their children and families. Baby's Space has continued to serve children during the Covid-19 crisis, reducing numbers by about half in its classrooms, and has moved much of the program's parent and staff training to online platforms.

"Managing through Covid and the community violence when George Floyd was murdered, and managing the kids around the fear of everything, has been our top priority. But I feel the strength in this community, people really pulled together," said Debbie Lund, executive director of Baby's Space. "We have really good strong teachers here, so we've been able to adjust how we deliver our programming given that we can't have parents in the building. The parent piece of our program is now mainly at our front door and on Zoom, with some items that we drive around and deliver to them, like art supplies and 'family night in a bag.' Because their kids are at home so much now, we are working to help parents immediately integrate what they're learning with us into their daily routines at home. For the staff development piece of the program, we were able to create a team of teachers from the community we serve who got trained in our new curriculum, so they were the ones who went into the classrooms to work with teachers instead of white therapists; this worked really well, because the teachers connected with them. And because we are operating at about 50% of the kids, we are making lemonade out of lemons and getting more teachers into their training during the day rather than after work. We couldn't do this, we couldn't be this good at what we're doing, without the support from Sheltering Arms."

(more)

Another grantee in south Minneapolis, **826 MSP**, which is part of a national network of youth writing centers, developed an environmental and nature themed writing and literacy summer camp for kids, called Outdoors Outspoken. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, staff have been working from home since mid-March, and summer programming has been conducted virtually, with packets of writing activities delivered to families each week.

“Coronavirus has brought us closer to the families we serve. In light of their children’s learning loss this spring, parents asked us for more rigorous curriculum for this summer. And then George Floyd was murdered,” said Ashley Lustig, development and communications director of 826 MSP. “While our building was not damaged, our students predominantly live and go to school in the neighborhood, and a lot of them identify as Black, African American, East African, and multi-racial. It would have been a disservice not to address in our curriculum what they’re experiencing, both of racism and the uprising. Our students have important perspectives that the world needs to hear, so we made sure to provide a safe environment to be able to talk about what makes them feel safe. We adjusted our curriculum to talk directly about racism but still positioned from environmental justice, equity, and access to outdoor spaces. We talked about local parks in the area and then discussed issues of homelessness at places like Powderhorn Park and places they have seen. We tied water quality science experiments with the water crises at Flint and Standing Rock. We talked about Indigenous land, statues of colonizers, and name changes – all recent events they have heard about or seen. In the last week of the camp they put it all together, including writing a letter to a public official, learning how to write persuasively and effectively. I think our students are really remarkable. They’re hungry for a different world. They want justice. They want safety. They are hungry for positive change. Our students are writing us to a better future.”

In Duluth, the **American Indian Community Housing Organization (AICHO)** operates a supportive housing program in downtown Duluth serving previously homeless American Indian families. Sheltering Arms is supporting AICHO’s Gimaajii Healthy Families initiative, a youth food and gardening program with the goal of restoring connections to culture, through food and gardening, as a path to health equity and healing. Covid-19 has significantly impacted how staff is able to connect with families and children, leading to creative adaptations that blend cultural traditions with an understanding of what today’s kids are interested in.

“One of the challenges with the pandemic is that our primary way of doing things and interacting with families has always been face to face, as a community. We have had to find new and creative ways of engaging families and bringing people together around food and culture,” said Katie Schmitz, children’s program coordinator at AICHO. “One benefit of not being able to meet in groups is that we can provide more individualized attention and dig deeper into the skill-building. For example, recently we did a lip-balm-making session, and my student was excited to share the plant knowledge she gained by making a how-to video that could be shared with other kids in the program. This also provided the opportunity for the student to develop her video tech skills. Our program goals have always been to remove the barriers to health equity our families disproportionately face. Covid has exacerbated these barriers, but it has also raised more awareness about their existence and definitely emphasized the importance of providing programming that teach these skills that build resilience during trying times like these.”

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the child care industry has been devastated. Sheltering Arms has been working to do whatever possible to help child care providers during this time, including being part of a coalition getting peacetime grants to providers to help them stay in business and open. One of the foundation’s advocacy grantees, the **Joint Religious Legislative Coalition (JRLC)**, succeeded in getting the legislature to approve an increase for the child care assistance program (CCAP), many of the recipients of the CCAP funding are women of color working in their communities.

“Young children can’t come to the Capitol and advocate for themselves,” said Anne Krisnik, executive director of the Joint Religious Legislative Coalition. “The generous grant from the Sheltering Arms Foundation helped us guarantee that legislators from across the state heard stories from their own

communities about the needs of children and parents. This is the best way to make laws – by legislators understanding how their decisions impact individuals and communities. And it worked. Policy makers heard these stories and made an investment in child care, one that serves all our communities.”

In Sheltering Arms’ early childhood funding category, 21 grantees received a total of \$238,000. In the youth development funding category, 17 programs received a total of \$192,000 in grants. This year’s funding includes \$60,000 in advocacy/public policy grants, continuing the foundation’s work to improve systems and policies that affect Minnesota’s children. Areas served by the 38 Sheltering Arms grantees include Blaine, Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park, Duluth, Fridley, Lake Elmo, Landfall, Maplewood, Minneapolis, Minnetonka, Red Wing, Spring Lake Park, St. Louis Park, St. Paul, and Stillwater.

The 38 grantees supported by Sheltering Arms in 2020-2021 are:

- 826 MSP (Minneapolis)—\$13,000 grant (youth development)
- Ain Dah Yung Center (St. Paul)—\$10,000 grant (youth development)
- American Indian Community Housing Org. (Duluth)—\$15,000 grant (youth devel.)
- Baby’s Space (Minneapolis)—\$10,000 grant (early childhood)
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Greater Twin Cities (St. Paul, serves the Twin Cities area)—\$10,000 grant (youth development)
- Centro Tyrone Guzman (south Minneapolis)—\$12,000 grant (early childhood)
- Child Care Aware of MN (St. Paul, serves statewide)—\$15,000 grant (advocacy, early ch.)
- Children’s Theatre Company (south Minneapolis)—\$13,000 grant (early childhood)
- createMPLS (Minneapolis)—\$5,000 grant (youth development)
- Division of Indian Work (Minneapolis, serves the metro area)—\$15,000 grant (youth devel.)
- Emma Norton Services (St. Paul, serves St. Paul and Maplewood)—\$10,000 grant (youth dev.)
- Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphonies (St. Paul)—10,000 grant (youth development)
- Hallie Q. Brown Community Ctr, Inc. (St. Paul)—\$10,000 grant (early child.)
- Haven Housing (north Minneapolis)—\$12,500 grant (early childhood)
- Hispanic Outreach of Goodhue County (Red Wing, serves Goodhue County)—\$15,000 grant (youth devel.)
- Hmong American Partnership (St. Paul, serves metro area)—\$10,000 grant (early childhood)
- Interfaith Action of Greater St. Paul (St. Paul)—\$15,000 grant (youth devel.)
- Joint Religious Legislative Coalition (Minneapolis, serves statewide)—\$10,000 grant (advocacy in early childhood)
- Lee Carlson Center for Mental Health & Well-Being (Fridley, serves Anoka County and surrounding communities)—\$15,000 grant (early childhood)
- Liberty Community Church (north Minneapolis)—\$15,000 grant (youth development)
- Lifetrack, fiscal agent for Minnesota Coalition for Targeted Home Visiting (St. Paul, serves Ramsey County)—\$10,000 grant (advocacy in early childhood)
- Northland Foundation (Duluth, serves northeastern Minnesota)—\$15,000 grant (early childhood)
- Perspectives, Inc. (St. Louis Park)—\$10,000 grant (early childhood)
- Project for Pride in Living (Minneapolis, serves inner-city neighborhoods of Minneapolis, St. Paul, and first-ring suburbs)—\$12,000 grant (youth development)
- Reading Partners (St. Paul, serves metro area)—\$10,000 grant (youth development)
- ServeMinnesota (Minneapolis, serves statewide)—\$10,000 grant (early childhood)
- Southside Family Nurturing Center (south Minneapolis)—\$10,000 grant (early childhood)
- St. Croix Family Resource Center (Stillwater, serves St. Croix River Valley)—\$10,000 grant (youth development)

- St. David's Center for Child & Family Development (Minnetonka, serves the Twin Cities metro area)—\$10,000 grant (early childhood)
- Think Small (St. Paul, serves statewide)—\$15,000 grant (advocacy in early childhood)
- Urban Strategies, Inc. (St. Louis, MO, serves the Heritage Park affordable housing in near north Minneapolis)—\$10,000 grant (youth development)
- Washburn Center for Children (Minneapolis, serves metro area)—\$10,000 grant (early ch.)
- Way to Grow (Minneapolis, serves metro area)—\$12,500 grant (early childhood)
- Wayside Recovery Center (St. Louis Park)—\$10,000 grant (early childhood)
- We IMPACT! (Minneapolis)—\$10,000 grant (early childhood)
- YMCA of the Greater Twin Cities (Minneapolis, serves metro area)—\$7,000 grant (youth devel.)
- YWCA of Duluth (Duluth)—\$8,000 grant (early childhood)
- YWCA of Minneapolis (Minneapolis)—\$10,000 grant (advocacy in youth devel.)

EDITOR'S NOTE: For information about each grantee and what they are using the Sheltering Arms' grant funds to do this year, a fact sheet of the annotated list of 2020-2021 grantees is available.

About the Sheltering Arms Foundation

The mission of the Sheltering Arms Foundation is to invest in the lives of children and help them reach their full potential. Based in Minneapolis, the foundation funds nonprofit organizations and supports policies that benefit Minnesota children and their families who have the least access to resources. Since its inception as a grantmaking foundation in 1983, the foundation has provided more than 1,290 grants totaling over \$16.6 million. The next deadline for grant applications is in January 2021, with grant applications from Episcopal congregations due on April 1, 2021. For information about submitting a grant request, volunteering, or donating to the foundation, visit <https://sheltering-arms.org/> or call 612-871-9210 (toll-free: 866-871-9210).

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