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June 23, 2008

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FUND FOR DEMOCRATIC COMMUNITIES ANNOUNCES FIRST GRANTS

GREENSBORO, N.C. – Eleven North Carolina efforts to strengthen communities by engaging youth and adults in authentic democracy have won grants in the first grant cycle of the Fund for Democratic Communities (F4DC), a new private operating foundation.

The F4DC received 23 proposals totaling more than \$100,000 and awarded 11 grants totaling \$20,000 in its first grant cycle. Four additional proposals are expected to lead to new partnerships through which the Fund will provide ongoing support.

“We are so excited to be able to support and celebrate some really good community work that’s already going on,” said Muktha Jost, co-chair of the Grants Committee and a faculty member in the N.C. A&T State University School of Education.

The following initiatives received funds.

- The Greensboro office of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee received \$3,000 to support staff and other expenses related to creating and sustaining a locally-based worker committee to lead farm-worker campaigns.
- The Burnsville Land Community, a community land trust in Western North Carolina, received \$2,000 to support the hiring of a bilingual community organizer to assist the community with implementing their resident-controlled park management and training program.
- The Greater Glenwood Neighborhood association received \$500 to support research, community-building, and other efforts engaging young people and adults in Glenwood to prepare to create a mural celebrating the neighborhood.
- Freshlife, a nonprofit based in Durham, received \$2,000 to support the Freshlife Discovery Camp, a three-day teen summer experience that will provide life and leadership skills in an interactive learning environment.

- El Kilombo, a collective focused on the concerns of people of color, students and working class communities in Durham, received \$2,000 to support a youth-led, quarterly community newsletter for the El Kilombo community.
- Homekeeping, a Greensboro-based anti-foreclosure agency, received \$3,000 to support data entry, grant writing, board development, fundraising, and other efforts at boosting the sustainability of the organization.
- Heirs to a Fighting Tradition, a Triangle-based group that uses stories to strengthen and broaden the base of North Carolina social justice organizers, received \$1,500 to support the Speak Your Truth Institutes to help young people learn to think, speak, listen, and act collectively for change.
- Just Economics, an Asheville-based organization working to increase the minimum wage in Western North Carolina, received \$2,000 to support Voices for Economic Justice, a program aimed at developing leadership and increasing democratic participation among low-income people and people of color.
- The Southeast Guilford Community Association received \$500 to support website publicity and community-building efforts in the Southeast Guilford area.
- The Latino Coalition, a Randolph County-based group, received \$1,500 to support Randolph Reads, a county-wide project that will engage residents in reading *At Home on the Field*, a book that focuses on the experiences of new Latino residents of North Carolina, as a spur to inclusive community-building.
- Stone Circles, a nonprofit organization that sustains activists and strengthens work for justice through spiritual practice and principles, received \$2,000 to support Soul Sanctuary, a refuge and retreat program for community activists.

“These grants are the first test of our hypothesis that a little bit of money, joined with people power, makes a big difference, said Marnie Thompson, who founded the F4DC, based on that belief, with fellow activist Ed Whitfield. “It’s people who help make communities better, not money.”

The F4DC, which made its public debut in January, is financed by a bequest from the estate of Thompson’s father, the late W. Hayden Thompson of Cleveland, Ohio. The small foundation has assets expected to total \$5 million by 2013. The Fund will offer another \$20,000 in its second grant cycle later this year.

The Fund’s mission is to support “community-based initiatives and institutions that foster authentic democracy to make communities better places to live.” Its focus areas are education, recreation, arts, housing, community health and safety, justice, humans’ relationship with the natural environment, relationships between different communities, and sustainable economic development.

In addition to making grants, F4DC provides direct technical assistance to grassroots organizations and conduct research along with supporting other community projects.

To make its first grants, F4DC’s Board of Directors created a process that included a grant information session and a daylong grant-writing workshop for grant-seekers. The board also worked to expand the grant

decision-making process to include more voices.

In addition to Jost, Thompson and Whitfield, the Grants Committee included co-chair Steve Sumerford, Marilyn Baird, Terry Austin, Phyllis Carter, Nicole Lambelet, Kyle Lambelet, Isabell Moore, Stephen Johnson, Logie Meachum and Barton Parks.

“What a joy it was to work with such good people who brought their very best thinking and compassion to this extended process,” Thompson said. “It all worked well and really modeled a striving for more democracy. We realize, though, that we still have a lot to learn about how to provide the right amount of support at the right time to grassroots efforts.”

More information about F4DC is available online at www.f4dc.org, or by calling 336-617-5329. Proposals for grants in the F4DC’s second grant cycle will be due September, 2008. New grant application forms and the exact timeline for this next grant cycle will be posted to the web site soon.

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