

GRANTS AND GIVING

Beyond geniuses, MacArthur awards small non-profits

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North Lawndale Employment Network and Chicago Rehab Network are among nine winners in this country and abroad of a new award for small non-profits from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

The Creative and Effective Institutions Awards range from \$250,000 to \$500,000. The winners all have annual budgets of \$2.5 million or less, and, though small, they are considered comers in their fields.

The awards are an extension, of sorts, of the foundation's famous five-year, \$500,000 grants for creative individuals, but those "genius" grants have no strings attached. The grants to the non-profits were sized to meet specific needs or purposes.

The North Lawndale Employment Network plans to use its \$400,000 award to retire debt and create a cash reserve. The 9-year-old organization, with a budget of \$1.2 million, trains and helps the hard to employ, especially ex-offenders, find good-paying jobs, including those at its beekeeping and honey-making operation on the West Side.

"This award says that a lot of remarkable things can happen on the ground in communities," said Brenda Palms-Barber, the group's chief executive director. "It takes a lot of innovation, tenacity and hard work to do the kind of work we do. This will allow us to take our work to a higher level of scale."

Kevin Jackson, executive director of Chicago Rehab Network, said his group plans to use its \$350,000 award to establish a cash reserve and perhaps to hire a full-time development staff. The 25-year-old group, with a \$1 million budget, is a collective of community development organizations and an advocate for affordable housing. He said the award will encourage his group "to carry on and push the envelope."

The winners were expected to be announced at an Oct. 5 ceremony, to be followed by seminars on their work. A foundation spokesman said the announcement was moved forward to give the winners and those who wish to attend the ceremony and seminars more time to make arrangements.

The other winners are:

- CLEEN Foundation, Lagos, Nigeria, \$300,000. CLEEN is devoted to police accountability and reform in a country still struggling with its recent past as a military dictatorship. The award is to acquire and equip a training facility.

- Fundar: Centro de Analisis e Investigacion, Mexico City, \$500,000. This group tracks public spending related to human rights, reproductive health and AIDS prevention. The grant is to be used to equip an office.

- Independent Council of Legal Expertise, Moscow, \$250,000. The group promotes legal-system reform and human rights. The grant is to be used for a permanent Moscow office.

- Knowledge Ecology International, London, Geneva and Washington, \$500,000. Now a joint venture of two groups, it monitors intellectual-property developments. The award will help it gain independent non-profit status.

- Peruvian Society for Environmental Law, Lima, \$325,000. The award will go for training and technical assistance.

- RealBenefits, Boston, \$500,000. The Web-based service, which has operations in Chicago, is used to help enroll the needy in suitable assistance programs. The money is to help bolster back-office operations.

- Society for Education, Action and Research in Community Health, Maharashtra, India, \$300,000. The group is to use the award to study maternal morbidity and youth sexual and reproductive health.

All the winners are prior recipients of MacArthur grants.

New law: The new federal pension law contains provisions intended to boost and reform charitable giving.

Perhaps the most significant is allowing taxpayers age 70 1/2 or older to distribute tax-free from their traditional or Roth IRAs up to \$100,000 a year to a charity through 2007. The provision does not apply to distributions to private foundations, supporting organizations or donor-advised funds - to the chagrin of many community foundations, which are popular repositories for donor-advised funds.

Individuals who claim charitable deductions generally will have to keep better records of the transactions. Deductions won't be allowed for donations of clothing and household goods that are not in "good" condition or have low monetary value, such as old socks.

Grants: The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is giving Northwestern University \$4.9 million over four years to develop affordable diagnostic devices for infectious diseases rife in developing nations. NU received \$3 million from the foundation early this year to study HIV prevention strategies in Africa.

Chicago's A Silver Lining Foundation has received \$23,000 from Jewel-Osco to fund free mammograms for medically underserved women.

Chicago's Redmoon Theater received \$8,000 from the New York-based music-commissioning group Meet the Composer for its fall spectacle, to be presented Oct. 3-9 in South Austin's Columbus Park.

People: The American Lung Association of Metropolitan Chicago hired Cheryl Byers as deputy executive director for programs, policy and professional services. ... The Newberry Library promoted Hjordis Halvorson to vice president for library services. ... Illinois Spina Bifida Association, which recently moved to Chicago from Lisle, hired Fred Barney as development director and Rebecca May as program director. ... Howard Brown Health Center named Dr. James Thomas Barrett as chief medical officer.

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