



BLANDIN FOUNDATION™

For Immediate Release

Blandin Foundation awards \$4.9 million in new and sustaining grants

GRAND RAPIDS, Minn. (December 23, 2008) – Blandin Foundation trustees approved \$4,864,100 in new and sustaining grants during its December 15-16 meeting, including support for rural housing, youth initiatives, and Grand Rapids' emergency homeless shelter and chemical dependency facility..

Trustees also marked a transition in leadership at this, its annual business meeting, from George Thompson (of Rochester, Minn.) to Marian Barcus (of Grand Rapids). Thompson had been a board member for 12 years, three of which were as chairman.

“The opportunity to thank George Thompson for his leadership and service was a real highlight,” says Jim Hoolihan, foundation president. “George has great passion for rural Minnesota, especially Grand Rapids, and has done our communities and the Foundation a great service by representing us these years. He has been a strong chairman, and we are honored to have yet another trusted leader, Marian Barcus, to lead us into the future.”

Among grants considered and approved by trustees was the continuation of investment in affordable rural housing through the **Greater Minnesota Housing Fund**, a \$2 million grant over two years. GMHA was an initiative that began in 1996 through a partnership of the Blandin and McKnight Foundations. An independent organization, GMHA will use the grant to stimulate development of affordable homes for rural families and for foreclosure prevention funding, strategies to stabilize at-risk families and neighborhoods, development in conjunction with the Iron Range Readiness Initiative, and more. “GMHA is an excellent way to support rural Minnesota on an issue that is central to the current economic crisis,” says Wade Fauth, Blandin Foundation grants director.

Also housing-related, a \$404,100 grant to **Legal Aid Service of Northeast Minnesota** will provide civil legal services for low-income residents of Itasca County, with special funding to assist with mortgage foreclosure and debt collection law.

Grants were approved for a number of youth-related initiatives in the greater Itasca County region. **Bovey-Coleraine Youth Center** will receive a grant of \$85,000 to continue their work in providing a safe place for youth, after-school education, tutoring and literacy, and assistance with a variety of other core needs. **Boys and Girls Club of the Leech Lake Area** will receive \$75,000 for sustain the work of the club and to grow their new unit in the S. Lake community. **Ground Floor** (a program of Youth for Christ), will receive \$85,000 for their programming in Grand Rapids that provides youth a safe, chemical-free environment, access to a positive adult role model, planned activities and opportunities for growth, learning and skill development.

Grants to **Hope House** and **Grace House** will allow these two Grand Rapids organizations to better locate their facilities. Grace House will receive \$400,000 for purchasing a permanent facility (currently held by Hope House) for their emergency homeless shelter services. Hope House, a residential chemical dependency treatment center, will receive \$250,000 for relocating to a more rural location than their current facility in central Grand Rapids.

“This is a landmark time for the Blandin Foundation and for all foundations,” says Jim Hoolihan. “Endowments that fund foundations’ grant-making and programs are reduced nationally, including here at the Blandin Foundation. Our assets have seen decreases by 20 to 30 percent. With that reality, we are working hard to make *all* of our resources stretch as far as possible and to be as focused as possible on both meeting both short-term needs and longer-term opportunity. We remain committed to our home community and working with our partners who are in place and already so effective at meeting today’s challenges.”

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Note to editor: A full listing of all Foundation grants awarded at the December 2007 board meeting is attached and is posted on the Foundation’s web site: www.blandinfoundation.org.

Blandin Foundation, Minnesota’s largest rural-based private foundation is located in Grand Rapids, Minn. Its mission is to strengthen rural Minnesota communities, especially the Grand Rapids area, through grants, leadership development programs and public policy initiatives. The Foundation helps communities provide choice and opportunity for all, especially people facing social and economic challenges.

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Blandin Foundation Grants approved in December 2008

The Blandin Foundation Board of Trustees approved grants totaling \$4,864,100 at its December 2008 meeting. In 2008, Grand Rapids and Itasca County received 62 percent of the Foundation's grants paid.

Rural Voice Grants – Grants to help rural residents be their own voice through supporting new and existing avenues to express the rural perspective in local and statewide policy debates.

Organization	Grant Award
Local Grants	
Itasca Community Television	\$150,000 over two years
For continued operating support	
	Total \$150,000

Educational Attainment Grants – Grants to support rural communities in strengthening the educational attainment of disadvantaged groups.

Organization	Grant Award
Local Grants	
Boys and Girls Club of Leech Lake	\$75,000
For continued operating support of the Boys and Girls Club in Deer River and S. Lake	
Itasca Community College	\$100,000 over two years
Project support for the Native Student Achievement Initiative in Itasca County	
Itasca Community College	\$350,000
For financial aid assistance for Itasca County high school graduates during the 2009-10 school year	
Rural Minnesota Grants	
Cook County Higher Education	\$125,000
For the Distance Education Resource Center in Grand Marais to purchase and renovate a building for use as a headquarters	
	Total \$650,000

Economic Opportunity Grants/Investment—Awards that assist Grand Rapids/Itasca County area communities or statewide rural initiatives to identify and mobilize economic assets.

Organization	Grant Award
Local Grants	
Itasca Economic Development Corporation For continued operating assistance to promote economic development in Itasca County	\$250,000
Minnesota Wood Education Project For continued support of group third-party certification efforts and supplier networking throughout rural Minnesota	\$90,000 over two years
Rural Minnesota Grants	
The Conservation Fund Project support for working forest conservation easements.	\$150,000
Dovetail Partners Project support for the Minnesota-Made Home Project throughout rural Minnesota	\$25,000
Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation Project support to increase the success of new immigrant/minority individuals in the southern region of Minnesota	\$75,000 over 1.5 years
Total \$740,000	

Fairness and Opportunity—Grants toward social justice initiatives, especially those that address root causes.

Organization	Grant Award
Local Grants	
Bovey Coleraine Youth Center For continued operating support of the Youth Center	\$85,000
GRACE House Capital and operating support to continue and expand services to those who are homeless in the Itasca County area	\$400,000
Hope House Capital support to construct a chemical dependency residential treatment men's facility in Itasca County	\$250,000
Legal Aid of Northeast Minnesota Project support for the Foreclosure Prevention Program in Itasca County and continued operating support to provide legal services to residents of Itasca County	\$404,100 over three years
Youth for Christ Continuation funding for the Ground Floor Youth Center in Itasca County	\$85,000
Rural Minnesota Grants	
Corporation for Supportive Housing Project support for the Minnesota American Indian tribes supportive housing initiative throughout rural Minnesota	\$100,000 over two years
Greater Minnesota Housing Fund For continued support to create affordable housing for families throughout rural Minnesota	\$2 million over two years
Total \$3,324,100	

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