



## Reinventing Grant making, Act II



James Carlson of BucketWorks facilitates opening session of WCF's 2nd Community Grantmaking event.



Small group meets to learn about a grassroots funding proposal and provide feedback.

February 26th marked Wisconsin Community Fund's second experiment in making social justice grant making a more participatory process. Building on its initial experience in April 2010 in Madison, the Fund played host to some 40 community activists and donors in a converted warehouse, operated by event co-organizer

BucketWorks, just south of downtown Milwaukee.

Throughout this Saturday morning, participants presented their funding proposals to one another and rated those proposals. The afternoon culminated in

developing grant allocations, based on a weighted funding formula. In total, the process yielded 18 grant recommendations—ranging from small to sizable - totaling nearly \$35,000.

One of the premises of the event was to demystify the grant making process, which can often seem to grantseekers like a black box into which proposals are fed, with decisions emerging mysteriously at the other end. In community grant making, the event participants can be both proposal presenters and proposal reviewers. Likewise,

participants are encouraged to be not just activists but donors. In fact, two Milwaukee donors challenged the attendees to meet a \$1,000 match they kindly contributed to the community grant making effort. In a few short minutes, the group had met and exceeded the match by pooling gifts both large and small.

Money for social change was not the only currency of the day. Groups exchanged and critiqued one another's project ideas, connected the dots between their respective communities, and even joined forces in some cases. The Milwaukee Time Exchange also served as a broker of non-monetary resources in the form of services in-kind—both services offered and services requested—thus challenging the traditional notion of “currency” as a purely financial construct.

The net result was an event wherein grassroots groups from throughout the Milwaukee area—and in some cases beyond—met to jointly determine how best to apportion scarce financial resources for maximum community benefit. With the lessons learned and constructive criticism gleaned from this event, Wisconsin Community Fund plans to continue improving the way it provides funding for social change in Wisconsin. ■

**“I admired how all the board members and James [Carlson, facilitator] remained so grounded and positive throughout the day. Felt like I had elders in the struggle.”**

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank our donors, many of whom have supported us since our beginning, some 28 years ago. Your continued belief in our mission is heartening and much appreciated, not only by Wisconsin Community Fund but by our grantees as well. As you know, the Fund has been a beacon of hope over the years to non-profit organizations that are "too new, too small or too controversial for mainstream funders." For many of our grantees, the Wisconsin Community Fund has been the first support ever received from a foundation and has allowed them to leverage that support into additional dollars from other foundations and individuals.

I'm proud of the fact that we have continued to look for innovative ways to do grant making, which culminated in two community grant making events during the past 12 months, one in Madison in April 2010 and one in Milwaukee in February 2011. We've learned a great deal from both experiences and will continue to refine the process.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the board of WCF. They are an amazing group of people, dedicated to the mission and willing to step up to an increased workload as we reshaped the grant making process while at the same time also exploring ways to move WCF forward as an organization.

Finally, I would especially like to thank Cathy Miller, who is also finishing her second three-year term on the board along with me. Not only did she serve on the WCF board, she was also our representative to the board of the Funding Exchange—WCF's national support organization—for many years. She may be leaving the board, but is not ceasing her commitment and support of this unique organization. ■

—Karen Campbell

## Collaboration: Water Issues Bring Groups Together

Among other benefits, Wisconsin Community Fund's Second Community Grantmaking event provided kindred groups the chance to compare notes and even plot strategy together. Such was the case with Milwaukee nonprofits working on community gardening. The health benefits of community gardens are significant, especially in urban areas lacking grocery stores (often referred to as "food deserts"). In communities where fast food restaurants and mini-marts abound, fresh produce can be a godsend, especially considering our rising national epidemic of obesity. Urban gardens can also foster community building through "sweat equity". Families that produce their own vegetables also obtain much-needed cost savings. And at a structural level, community gardens begin to change the relationship of consumers to the prevailing industrial food system.

During the morning of February 26th, two groups discovered in community gardening the basis for collaboration, specifically around the issue of water. An example of the challenges of managing a community garden is that the City of Milwaukee discourages gardeners from using city hydrants as a water source. Two local groups, however, made common cause around water. One is Milwaukee Urban Gardens (MUG), a 10-year-old nonprofit land trust that works with neighborhood residents to develop and maintain community gardens.

After presenting its proposal for sustainable water solutions for community gardens, MUG Executive Director Bruce Wiggins learned that Transition Milwaukee's Working Group on Water Resources shared its concern. The two groups decided to partner on a project dubbed the TM Water Group. According to MUG's proposal, "this project helps to solve several real problems in Milwaukee through a coalition approach that involves grassroots people including people of color and low-income persons."

The project will promote the concept of water harvesting.

*Collaboration continued on back page*

### Small group considers collaboration opportunities between environmental projects.



## Funding Exchange Responds to Donor Concerns

When pro-union activists took over the Wisconsin state capitol in February, the Funding Exchange (FEX), of which Wisconsin Community Fund is a member, received calls from several longstanding donor activists who wanted to support the protesters. As the donors weren't sure how best to support the protests, FEX immediately reached out to its network of progressive, grassroots activists who just as quickly responded with a list of the most effective groups organizing in Madison.

Next, the earthquake and tsunami hit Japan. And the same question arose.

As a result of the progressive community's desire to



PHOTO BY ANNE M. CONNOR

Opponents of Gov. Scott Walker's proposed budget bill fill the Rotunda of the Wisconsin State Capitol.

mobilize in support of rapidly emerging social issues, the Funding Exchange has established a Rapid Response Fund to help donor activists find the best match for contributions. FEX's primary focus is to support of people in Wisconsin and Japan; tomorrow our dollars may be speedily needed somewhere else.

With 31 years of experience under its belt, and a nationwide network of 16 member foundations, the Funding Exchange is in a unique position to help bring necessary resources to groups that are community-based and that are committed to social justice.

Contributions made to Rapid Response Fund—Japan will support the International Medical Corps, an organization working with local groups to fill critical gaps by focusing on affected areas that have not been reached, and the Japan Multicultural Relief Fund to ensure the Japanese ethnic minorities are reached in this crisis, unless you specify otherwise.

With Rapid Response Fund—Wisconsin, FEX is working in partnership with Wisconsin Community Fund to mobilize resources for groups engaged specifically in the issue of workers' rights. The FEX website ([www.fex.org](http://www.fex.org)) contains a link to Rapid Response-Wisconsin, where visitors can see a list of workers' rights organizations from which donor activists may choose to direct their giving. Alternatively, donor activists may choose their own recipient organization—pending our confirmation that it

- **Gifts of Cash** The Fund accepts cash, checks, MasterCard, VISA and American Express. Electronic fund transfer is available for monthly or quarterly pledges. Secure online donations can also be made at [www.wcfund.org](http://www.wcfund.org).

- **Workplace Giving** Many employers make Community Shares of Wisconsin part of their charitable payroll deduction programs. Contributions made through Community Shares benefit the Fund as well as other non-profit organizations.

- **Stock & Securities** You can avoid capital gains taxes while receiving a tax deduction by giving a gift of stock or securities.

- **Donor Advised Giving** As a donor, you can make gifts to particular groups or areas of interest.

- **Planned Giving** Bequests and other planned giving mechanisms are a powerful way to leave a lasting legacy of devotion to change.

*Contributions are fully tax-deductible in accordance with the law. For more information on making a donation, call 608.251.6834.*

## Jack Rosenberg Award

Wisconsin Community Fund's Grant making Committee wished to recognize the community grant making project that best exemplified the spirit of collaboration among grassroots organizations. After reviewing the grant applications, the Committee chose the TM Water Group as the recipient of the Jack Rosenberg Award for most collaborative project proposal.

Jack Rosenberg was a successful Milwaukee businessman who gave freely of his time and management expertise to progressive causes in the City and beyond. He actively supported such causes as the COA Youth and Family Centers, Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corp. (WWBIC), and Wisconsin Community Fund. His business background also informed his view that the nonprofit sector needed to avoid duplication of resources by increasingly fostering strategic collaboration among like-minded organizations. His wife, Lucy Rosenberg, continues to build on Jack's philanthropic legacy through her volunteer leadership on various boards of directors, as well as her generous support of groups like Wisconsin Community Fund. ■

Wisconsin Community  
Fund raises money and  
gives it away to progressive  
groups that are too new, too  
small or too controversial  
for mainstream funders.

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Karen Campbell  
Vice President: Timeka Rumph  
Secretary: Cathy Miller  
Treasurer: Mike Engleson  
Kathy Ronco  
Dennis Grzezinski  
Rob Meiksins  
Hanif Nu'Man

#### STAFF

Interim Executive Director:  
Bruce Moffat  
Financial Manager: Barb Kneer

1202 Williamson Street, Suite 109  
Madison, WI 53703

info@wcfund.org  
www.wcfund.org



**WISCONSIN**  
COMMUNITY FUND

1202 Williamson St. Suite 109  
Madison, WI  
53703

Non-Profit  
Organization  
US Postage Paid  
Permit No. 2956  
Madison, WI

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

## Staff Change

In mid-January, Wisconsin Community Fund's Project Coordinator Jeff Streier left the Fund to pursue an exciting new challenge with AmeriCorps in Madison. He will still be conducting grant making, but will be returning to the federally-funded program with which he worked previously. During his nearly year-and-a-half stint, Jeff contributed greatly to the Fund, particularly at a time of experimentation with its grant making program. Jeff's creative thinking and research skills led directly to the innovative techniques and processes that formed the first and second Community Grant making events that have been held to date. Graciously, he continues to volunteer his time to the Fund, especially on matters of information technology. We will miss Jeff, but wish him great success in his new grant making position. ■



---

Collaboration *continued from page 2*

Using such techniques as cisterns, rain barrels, and rain gardens, the two groups seek to help community gardeners take advantage of Milwaukee's rainfall, even during low moisture periods in the summer. With a modest amount of funding from Wisconsin Community Fund, the collaborators plan to hire students to inventory current water needs of community gardens. Prototypes will then be developed to address rainwater harvesting needs and "how-to" guides written to share specific water solutions. The TM Water Group shows that, by working together, small amounts of timely grant funding can help kindle the spark of change at the grassroots. ■

---

Funding Exchange *continued from page 3*

is an eligible organization. They may also authorize the Wisconsin Community Fund to administer the gift. For more information on the Rapid Response Fund, visit [www.fex.org](http://www.fex.org), or contact Nanda Witharanage at [nanda.witharanage@fex.org](mailto:nanda.witharanage@fex.org) or 212-529-5300, ext. 313.

The Funding Exchange envisions the Rapid Response Fund as a mechanism for ensuring that contributions to these timely issues—no matter how large or how small—will create change, not charity. ■