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MY LIFE MY CHOICE AWARDED \$225,000 CUMMINGS GRANT

Boston nonprofit receives 3 years of funding from Cummings Foundation

BOSTON, MAY, 2023 – My Life My Choice is one of 150 local nonprofits that will share in \$30 million through Cummings Foundation’s major annual grants program. The Boston-based organization was selected from a total of 630 applicants during a competitive review process. It will receive \$225,000 over three years.

My Life My Choice is a national leader in the fight to end exploitation. They provide critical services to the most marginalized young people in communities across Eastern Massachusetts in order to prevent and disrupt the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC), commonly known as child sex trafficking, through survivor-led programs that educate and empower youth to find their voice and chart a positive life path.

“Funding from the Cummings Foundation will deepen our relationship with community providers in Essex County in an effort to support some of the most marginalized youth on the Northshore. This funding creates access to survivor-led services and opportunities for training and prevention for community-based providers. This decreases the waiting time for youth to be paired with a Survivor Mentor and increases connection and sense of belonging.” – Tina Valila, Clinical Director

This generous funding from the Cummings Foundation will support My Life My Choice’s expanded training, prevention, and Survivor Mentoring efforts in Essex County, with the goal of reaching and providing critical services to the youth who reside there who have experienced or are at disproportionate risk of experiencing commercial sexual exploitation.

The Cummings \$30 Million Grant Program primarily supports Massachusetts nonprofits that are based in and serve Middlesex, Essex, and Suffolk counties.

Through this place-based initiative, Cummings Foundation aims to give back in the areas where it owns commercial property. Its buildings are all managed, at no cost to the Foundation, by its affiliate, Cummings Properties. This Woburn-based commercial real estate firm leases and manages 11 million square feet of debt-free space, the majority of which exclusively benefits the Foundation.

“The way the local nonprofit sector perseveres, steps up, and pivots to meet the shifting needs of the community is most impressive,” said Cummings Foundation executive director Joyce Vyriotes. “We are incredibly grateful for these tireless efforts to support people in the community and to increase equity and access to opportunities.”

The majority of the grant decisions were made by about 90 volunteers. They worked across a variety of committees to review and discuss the proposals and then, together, determine which requests would be funded. Among these community volunteers were business and nonprofit leaders, mayors, college presidents, and experts in areas such as finance and DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion).

“It would not be possible for the Foundation to hire the diversity and depth of expertise and insights that our volunteers bring to the process,” said Vyriotes. “We so appreciate the substantial time and thought they dedicated toward ensuring that our democratized version of philanthropy results in equitable outcomes that will really move the needle on important issues in local communities.”

The Foundation and volunteers first identified 150 organizations to receive three-year grants of up to \$225,000 each. The winners included first-time recipients as well as nonprofits that had previously received Cummings grants. Twenty-five of this latter group of repeat recipients were then selected by a volunteer panel to have their grants elevated to 10-year awards ranging from \$300,000 to \$1 million each.

This year’s grant recipients represent a wide variety of causes, including housing and food insecurity, workforce development, immigrant services, social justice, education, and mental health services. The nonprofits are spread across 46 different cities and towns.

Cummings Foundation has now awarded \$480 million to greater Boston nonprofits. The complete list of this year’s 150 grant winners, plus nearly 1,500 previous recipients, is available at www.CummingsFoundation.org.

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About My Life My Choice

The mission of My Life My Choice is to provide survivor-led solutions aimed at ending the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Throughout Greater Boston, My Life My Choice provides survivor mentoring, intensive case management, mental health services, and group work to young people of all genders who have experienced exploitation. In addition, My Life My Choice provides prevention education, professional training, consultation, and advocacy nationwide. Since 2002, My Life My Choice has mentored over 900 youth, trained over 21,900 providers across the country, and provided prevention education groups to 3,800 girls. My Life My Choice is a model for communities across the country set on changing not only lives, but the structural inequities that give rise to trafficking and sexual exploitation.

About the Cummings Foundation

Woburn-based Cummings Foundation, Inc. was established in 1986 by Joyce and Bill Cummings of Winchester, MA and has grown to be one of the largest private foundations in New England. The Foundation directly operates its own charitable subsidiaries, including New Horizons retirement communities, in Marlborough and Woburn, and Cummings Health Sciences, LLC. Additional information is available at www.CummingsFoundation.org.