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United Way of Tri-County awarded \$300,000 Cummings Grant for Mobile Food Pantry

Framingham, May 22, 2024 – The United Way of Tri-County (UWTC) is one of 150 local nonprofits that will share in \$30 million through Cummings Foundation’s major annual grants program. The Framingham-based organization, serving 34 cities and towns in Middlesex, Norfolk, and Worcester counties was selected from a total of 715 applicants during a competitive review process. The United Way of Tri-County will receive \$300,000 over the next 10 years to fund their new mobile food pantry known as “Gus the Grocery Bus”.

The United Way of Tri-County focuses heavily on food security. To ensure that all local families have access to enough healthy food for three meals a day, UWTC runs two community hot meal programs and three food pantries, serving residents across the MetroWest/495 corridor. These food pantries provide residents with healthy food each month including shelf stable pantry items, fresh produce, meat, dairy, and bread. By providing groceries to local families, the food pantries reduce the financial burden on people struggling to make ends meet as they work to become self-sufficient. Over the last 18 months the number of families seeking help with food has increased by over 84%.

UWTC recognizes that many low-income residents have barriers that make monthly visits to the food pantries difficult. Through their new mobile food pantry, The United Way of Tri-County will deliver and distribute bus loads full of fresh, non-perishable groceries directly to underserved communities within the MetroWest/495 corridor, furthering their mission of ensuring that everyone has access to fresh, healthy food so they can thrive not just survive.

“We are incredibly honored to receive this grant,” said Paul Mina, President & CEO of the United Way of Tri-County. “For many years, we have been seeking a pathway to provide additional groceries and hot meals closer to food insecure individuals, seniors, and families. With this generous Cummings Foundation grant, we can begin to significantly improve outreach to highly vulnerable populations and improve overall health and quality of life for many additional families in our region.”

The United Way of Tri-County will use Cummings Grant funding to bring their mobile food pantry and service center “Gus the Bus” to those who need it most. Their plan is to begin serving residents in several MetroWest cities and towns this summer.

The Cummings \$30 Million Grant Program supports Massachusetts nonprofits that are based Middlesex, Essex, and Suffolk counties, plus six communities in Norfolk County: Brookline, Dedham, Milton, Needham, Quincy, and Wellesley.

Through this place-based initiative, Cummings Foundation aims to give back in the area 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.

“Greater Boston is fortunate to have a robust, dedicated, and highly capable nonprofit sector that supports and enhances the community in myriad ways,” said Cummings Foundation executive director and trustee Joyce Vyriotes. “The entire Cummings organization is thankful for their daily work to help all our neighbors thrive.”

The majority of the grant decisions were made by nearly 100 community 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).

“We believe strongly that grant decisions will be more equitable when made by a diverse group of community members,” said Vyriotes. “We’re incredibly grateful to the dozens of individuals who participated in our democratized philanthropic process.”

The Foundation and volunteers first identified 150 organizations to receive three-year grants of up to \$300,000 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 panel of community volunteers 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 49 different cities and towns.

Cummings Foundation has now awarded \$500 million to greater Boston nonprofits. The complete list of this year’s 150 grant winners, plus nearly 2,000 previous recipients, is available at www.CummingsFoundation.org.

About United Way of Tri-County

The United Way of Tri-County is a community building organization that brings people together to care for one another. It provides programs and services, connects volunteers, strengthens agencies, teaches social responsibility, and meets the critical needs of the community with the help of people like you. For more information visit www.uwotc.org.

About 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.



From Left to Right: United Way of Tri-County Staff - Joe Mina, Director of the Pearl Street Cupboard and Café; Director of the Marlborough Community Cupboard, Barbara LaGrenade, Kristen Corless, Grant and Community Engagement Manager, and Cummings Trustee, Robert Keefe are thrilled to celebrate after receiving word they received a Cummings Foundation Grant through the organizations \$30 Million Grant Program.



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