



Whatcom Community Foundation

CONNECTING PEOPLE WHO CARE
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Whatcom Community Foundation Partners with Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to Help Whatcom County Families Get More Support in Difficult Economic Times

New funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will help nonprofits address growing and urgent needs

Bellingham, WA – Whatcom Community Foundation (WCF) announced today a \$75,000 grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to increase local assistance for families facing economic challenges and other setbacks as a result of the recession.

Through the Gates Foundation grant, the WCF will provide funding to local nonprofits as a component of its 2010 competitive grant round. Funds will be awarded to programs and projects that connect residents to existing public benefits and other assistance; to help prevent and reduce family violence; and to provide more food and support for people struggling to feed their families.

“The grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation couldn’t have come at a better time,” remarked WCF President and CEO, Mauri Ingram. “A number of local organizations doing precisely the kind of work this grant is designed to support are struggling to meet demand. The Gates Foundation grant provides the opportunity to leverage a significant amount of local matching gifts to WCF, allowing us to better serve our community.”

In today’s difficult economic times, thousands of families in Whatcom County are struggling with job losses, dwindling savings, and foreclosures or evictions. At the same time, many local nonprofit organizations in the community are experiencing a growing demand for their services. According to area food banks, the number of families visiting their facilities continues to grow. Children and the elderly represent 52% of Whatcom County’s food bank clients. Thirteen percent of the county’s population receives basic food program assistance. In addition, more individuals and families that have never utilized benefits are seeking assistance.

WCF will utilize funds from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation grant to support and catalyze work that provides much needed assistance to individuals and families throughout Whatcom County during this particularly challenging economic period. Grants will be made through WCF’s competitive grant process which will begin this year. To promote and explain the grant opportunities, WCF will host several orientation meetings for local organizations in the coming weeks.

The new funding for WCF is one of 12 grants announced today by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in response to the growing needs of communities throughout Washington state. Nine additional community foundations are receiving funding to increase support services in their communities, and grant funding will help the Washington State Library increase programs to connect patrons with job-seeking assistance. The LAW Fund is receiving a grant to help

provide critical legal services for low-income Washingtonians facing economic hardship or family crises.

For more information on Whatcom Community Foundation, visit: www.whatcomcf.org. To learn more about the Gates Foundation's work in Washington state, visit www.gatesfoundation.org/washington.

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Whatcom Community Foundation (WCF) connects people who care with causes that matter. Since its inception in 1996, WCF has awarded more than \$5 million dollars in grants to local organization working to strengthen and enhance the Whatcom County community.

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