



Getting the Word Out: The Progressive Media Project Trains the Grassroots

by Jolin Mitchel



Have you ever read a news item that inspired you to write a response: a hasty rant, a glowing adulation, or a well thought out, even-handed treatise? Have your words of wisdom received the attention they deserve?

And what about all the energetic and effective groups out there, doing the good work of social justice. How often do we hear about their work outside of our own circles?

Clearly, we could all use a little help getting the message out. That's where the Progressive Media Project comes in.

The Progressive Media Project, an affiliate of the Progressive Magazine, provides communications trainings to grassroots activists and nonprofit groups. The Media Project waters the seeds of the grassroots movement by helping groups better communicate their important messages to the media. The Project provides tips and pointers on writing effective opinion pieces—like commentaries and letters to the editor—that might actually be picked up by opinion sections of newspapers around the state and around the country.

Recently, Bruce Moffat, our own Executive Director, joined a Media Project writing clinic to help him improve his op-ed writing skills. According to Bruce, “The clinic allows you to tap into the wealth of journalistic expertise of the staff. They help you frame and hone your organization’s message. We all need this kind help in order to get our stories to the media and the general public.”

But the process doesn’t stop after the good words are written . . .

The Progressive Media Project helps democratize the opinion sections of our nation’s newspapers by editing and distributing commentaries written by progressive leaders who really know the issues. Through the McClatchy-Tribune News Service, the Progressive Media Project distributes more than 200 commentaries each year to newspapers such as the *Baltimore Sun*, the *Miami Herald* and the *Chicago Tribune*.

Wisconsin Community Fund supports the writing clinics of the Progressive Media Project. In 2006 and 2007, the Media Project was the recipient of grant funding from Wisconsin Community Fund. For this good work, they were granted \$5000 last year and \$5185 in 2006. ■

Speaking of Change . . . Raising the Bar in Tough Times

By Bruce Moffat, Executive Director

As Wisconsin Community Fund begins its second quarter century of social justice grantmaking, we are both excited and daunted by the challenging goals we have set for ourselves in the coming three years. Our strategic plan calls for us to do three things:

- Increase our visibility
- Raise more money in order to . . .
- . . . Give away more grant money

Specifically, we seek to **double in three years our general fund grantmaking**. As you can see, we're not content with business as usual!

As it turns out, our timing may not have been the best. Between the current crisis of confidence in the financial market and the competing demands of a presidential election year, our progressive donors—in other words, YOU—are feeling the pinch.

On the other hand, the current economic situation only increases the demand for the Fund's social justice grant making services. If the average progressive contributor is concerned about finances, imagine the demands on the small grassroots social change groups supported by Wisconsin Community Fund. For groups that are on the frontlines of social change—doing anti-racism, economic justice, or gay and lesbian rights work—these are tough times.

Against this backdrop, Wisconsin Community Fund must also continue seeking the funds that support our much needed social justice grantmaking.

Your support takes many forms: moral, intellectual and, of course, financial. Let me say thanks in advance for aligning your charitable giving with social change in Wisconsin. ■



Ways to Donate

- **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.
- **Workplace Giving** Many employers make Community Shares of Wisconsin or Community Shares of Greater Milwaukee part of their charitable payroll deduction programs. Contributions made through these programs 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, contact Bruce Moffat, Executive Director, at 608.251.6834.

Funding Cycle Grantmaking Process

- **Letter of Intent** To be considered for submission of a full grant proposal, groups are asked to answer a series of questions in a letter of intent. These questions are included in the request for proposals and timelines of the funding cycle at www.wcfund.org and can be mailed and e-mailed to groups.
 - **Grant Proposal Packet** Based on the Letter of Intent, groups may be sent a WCF Grant Proposal Packet and invited to submit a proposal.
 - **On-Site Visit** The Grants Allocation Committee reads all proposals and based on their discussions, 15-20 groups are given an on-site visit by members of the Committee, WCF staff and the Board of Directors.
 - **Decision** The Grants Allocation Committee and the Board of Directors meet to respectively determine and confirm the new grantees for the current funding cycle. Congratulatory letters are sent out along with contracts to the new grantees.
- For further information about the grantmaking process, contact: Betsy Lawrence, Director of Program Services, 608.251.6834 betsy@wcfund.org ■*

Meet Sven Midelfort, a mental health practitioner at Group Health Cooperative. With his wife Petra, Sven lives in a co-housing neighborhood near downtown Madison. We asked Sven a few questions about his interest in social justice and how Wisconsin Community Fund meets his needs.

The Fund: How did you first become interested in social justice activism?

Sven Midelfort: I've been interested and involved in social justice all my life. My family and friends and even my own growth over time have influenced this.

The Fund: How did you first learn about The Fund?

SM: Through friends and the people I live with. Having lived in Madison the last 30 years, I've just become aware of things here.

The Fund: What specific philanthropic interests are satisfied by Wisconsin Community Fund?

SM: It addresses the redistribution of wealth and means. We're all in this together and there's no reason why one person should have more than another. I guess you could call these Scandinavian values.

The Fund: How does giving to The Fund fit into your broader philanthropy and activism?

SM: The Fund plays a big part. I believe in supporting local efforts, although I do support some international efforts as well, like Doctors Without Borders. There are plenty of issues here in Wisconsin and in our own communities that need to be addressed. In particular, I like The Fund's support of local initiatives like the Wisconsin Apprentice Organizers Project, domestic abuse issues and projects addressing the concerns of Native Americans.

The Fund: What other forms of philanthropy and social action are you involved in?

SM: My work as a social worker and therapist is a form of social action. I also support the Willy St. Coop and Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA). I just participated in the Bike the Barns tour, which was a 65-mile bike ride to support CSAs. Natural Step, a Swedish idea that encourages people and organizations to find ways to economize and live carbon-neutral, is another program I support. ■

Youth and Experience Strengthen Board of Directors

Wisconsin Community Fund is pleased to welcome Constance Clark and Timeka Rumph to the Board of Directors!

Constance Clark founded the African American Children's Theatre (AACT) in 1989 when, after two Milwaukee youth were gunned down in separate incidents, neighborhood residents asked her to use her experience in theatre to help the survivors cope with their grief. Since that time, AACT has given hundreds of underserved urban youth exposure to theatre while providing them with a safe haven in which to develop social skills, self-esteem and leadership skills. Arts organizations often find it difficult to demonstrate the results of their work when much of what they do is intangible. For this reason, Constance particularly appreciates the support and recognition she and AACT have received from Wisconsin Community Fund and is looking forward to serving the community as a board member.

Wisconsin Community Fund is pleased to welcome Timeka Rumph to the Board of Directors. Timeka has spent her professional career in the nonprofit sector, and, in the process, has developed expertise in grantmaking and donor relations. She joined the University of Wisconsin Foundation in 2003, serving most recently as Stewardship Coordinator. Prior to joining the Foundation, she worked for United Way of Dane County, where she supported the Community Building initiative. Timeka is looking forward to working with an organization like Wisconsin Community Fund that allows funding decisions to be made by the people working in the communities it supports. ■



Constance Clark and Timeka Rumph

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



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Media Justice is in the Air

In September, Wisconsin Community Fund launched its third Media Justice grant cycle. Featured here is a grant recipient from last year's Media Justice Fund Cycle, Madison's newest Low Power FM radio station, CityWIDE 99.1FM.



Standing in the garage which houses the broadcast equipment for CityWIDE, Eric Howland explains the technical end of the station. Wisconsin Community Fund granted CityWIDE \$5,450 to purchase the equipment seen here.

PHOTOS COURTESY: DAVE NANCE



Wisconsin Community Fund's Program Director, Betsy Lawrence, visits with members of CityWIDE, which broadcasts in Madison from 10am to 10pm Monday through Friday and all day Saturday. They share bandwidth with SoulWIDE, which broadcasts from 10 pm to 10am and all day Sundays. From left to right: Tom Koslovsky, Betsy Lawrence, Lea Zeldin, Eric Howland.