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Mary's Pence Grants Program Gives More Than Money

St. Paul, MN (August 14, 2018) – National funder and winner of the 2017 Minnesota Council of Nonprofits Responsive Philanthropy Award, Mary's Pence is hosting its first grantee retreat September 23-26, 2018 in Farmington, MN. Representatives from 15 women-led grassroots organizations from across the U.S. are expected to attend.

Based on needs identified by grantees through surveys and final reports, the retreat will focus on communicating a social justice message and will feature presentations on marketing, taking better pictures, problem solving for small nonprofits, and fundraising. Each organization will record a professionally compiled promotional video at the retreat, an asset grantees would typically find outside the reach of their budgets.

Social change happens slowly and can be hard to capture and convey to supporters, especially for organizations with only one or two staff members. A food shelf can share how many pounds of food they gave out and how many participants they served, but for non-profits focused on systemic change, like those supported by Mary's Pence, numbers and individual stories can be hard to capture. Changing policy or culture takes time, effort, and happens incrementally. Securing donations is competitive and non-profits need to prove themselves worthy of every dollar they take in. Without compelling individual success stories and data on direct impacts, capturing and maintaining donors' attention over extended periods proves difficult. Mary Ellen Mitchell, ED of Lydia's House in Cincinnati states:

We serve homeless single moms with housing and support. Most of our moms are African American. Most of our donors are white. I think it's hard to clearly communicate the structural injustice that the women we serve are caught up in... that their lives won't be changed substantially by short term interventions because they find themselves at the intersection of race, gender and poverty in a very hard battle for survival. I think it's hard to share this and our collective culpability in the challenges our guests face.

Mary's Pence organized the retreat as an opportunity for grantees to come together to learn, network, relax, and renew. Mary's Pence is hosting the retreat in response to the need for grantees to build capacity as they grow and seek sustainability. "This is a wonderful opportunity for our grantees to come together and receive support for the important work they do every day in their home communities," said Grants Manager Robyn Browning. "Making connections with other organizations working on the same issues in a different part of the country, learning about their successes and barriers will help all of the grantees at the table. It's difficult work to be a small grassroots nonprofit working on social justice issues. Some days can get to be very overwhelming due to the need and the unending to do list. By giving our grantees the opportunity to come to a different setting in Minnesota, we're hoping to spark renewal and inspiration."

Mary's Pence started raising funds for the retreat at their 30th anniversary celebration in April 2017. Thanks to the generous support from Mary's Pence donors, all attendee costs will be covered.

About Mary's Pence

Mary's Pence invests in women across the Americas by funding community initiatives and fostering collaborations to create social change. We envision a world where empowered women and their communities flourish in solidarity and justice. Mary's Pence funds grassroots organizations that are women led, community centered, focused on social justice values, and working for long term social change.

Learn more about Mary's Pence at maryspence.org or read what our grantees say about us at grantadvisor.org.

Mary's Pence grantees attending the retreat

Clare of Assisi House

Reading, Pennsylvania

Opened in May, 2017, *Clare of Assisi House* is the first facility in Berks County, PA dedicated to the successful re-entry of women ex-offenders and the only one providing long-term transitional housing. Mary's Pence is helping to fund their *Steps to Success* program focused on helping residents develop skills necessary to find and keep living wage employment.

Code/Art

Miami, Florida

Code/Art will be collaborating with the Girl Scouts of Tropical Florida to host a series of coding workshops for the 2018-2019 school year. The coding workshops will provide girls from primarily low-income households with the opportunity to learn a skill that may turn into a career where women and people of color are currently underrepresented.

Contact Center

Cincinnati, Ohio

The *Contact Center* provides opportunities for skill and leadership development to their members who are primarily Black mothers living below the poverty level. The *Contact Center* enriches their voices and provides them the opportunity to influence policy decisions that impact their own lives directly as well as broader human rights.

Centro de Recursos Educativos para Adultos (CREA)

New York, New York

CREA provides educational resources for the recent immigrant community in East Harlem and Upper Manhattan, NYC, including Spanish-speaking or a non-written indigenous language adult. Classes at *CREA* help immigrant adults attain full literacy both in their native language and in English, and offer culturally competent advice on how to navigate the resources of the city.

Exodus Lending

Minneapolis, Minnesota

Exodus Lending provides trapped payday borrowers a just pathway to financial stability. Initiated in 2015 by Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Exodus Lending serves Minnesotans trapped in payday debt by paying participants' debt, and setting up an interest free payment schedule.

Galanjo

Minnnetonka, Minnesota

Galanjo is a start-up organization that will work with Somali girls in grades 7-12 in the Twin Cities area by hosting Somali Girls Empowerment workshops. Fulfilling an unmet need, the workshops will educate, empower, and inspire Somali girls by raising awareness, developing communication skills, and providing resources needed to address the challenges that Somali girls are facing.

Iraqi and American Reconciliation Project (IARP)

Minneapolis, Minnesota

The *Women's Friendship Group*, a project of *IARP* promotes reconciliation between the people of Iraq and the United States, by engaging both Iraqis and Americans in cultural and personal exchanges, education, and the arts.

Lydia's House

Cincinnati, Ohio

Guests at Lydia's house are all homeless women and children who are victims of trauma, most of whom have been sexually abused and are impacted by systemic racism. Rooted in the tradition of Catholic Worker Houses, *Lydia's House* provides free housing, nightly cooked meals, bus passes, and structured savings programs, and more to their guests. They have also started an advocacy project called *Uprooting Injustice Together* in which volunteers, guests and former guests will advocate together for the end of family homelessness.

New Sanctuary Movement (at Voces de la Frontera)

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

The *New Sanctuary Movement (NSM)*, works for immigration reform and organizes immigrant and allied faith communities to support families facing separation due to deportation.. The Mary's Pence grant will fund a series of leadership trainings called *Mujeres Líderes*, or Women's Leadership, that will provide women of color with the communication and organizing skills they need to bring about systemic change in their community.

Project DIVA

Minneapolis, Minnesota

Project DIVA (which stands for Dignity, Integrity, Virtue, and Availability) works with young black women and girls primarily from inner-city neighborhoods. *Project DIVA* connects with girls early, providing a safe space for them to build healthy relationships in all areas of their lives so that they can become leaders and engaged, informed community members.

Reviving the Islamic Sisterhood for Empowerment (RISE)

St. Paul, Minnesota

RISE strengthens and amplifies the voices of Muslim women and empowers them through leadership development, community engagement, and philanthropy. The main goal of *RISE* is to make the underrepresented population of Islamic women activists more present in political processes. *RISE* promotes sustainability for women-led philanthropies and businesses through hands-on workshops, raising the visibility of Muslim women who are involved in civic engagement.

Soul 2 Soul

Denver, Colorado

Soul 2 Soul provides Black women-led, interfaith, racial justice programming that centers Black people and experiences on personal liberation and participation in anti-racist activism. They also work to develop healthy, just, and liberated communities by focusing on personal liberation and anti-racist activism in congregations and the greater Denver metro area.

The Kitchen Table

St. Louis, Missouri

The women of *The Kitchen Table* plan and prepare a meal each Thursday as part of the social enterprise model they have created, which also includes a catering service. The group supports one another as they combat poverty, homelessness, and oppressive economic and justice systems.

Welcoming the Stranger

Warminster, Pennsylvania

Welcoming the Stranger provides free education, training and resources to refugees and immigrants with the goal of helping each student improve their language and work skills, and giving them the resources needed to meet not only their own goals in the US, but empower them to actively participate in civic life, particularly around issues impacting immigrants.

Wishwas

New York, New York

Wishwas is a community of Bangladeshi immigrant women in New York City. It is also a sewing cooperative, an educational initiative, and a legal resource. *Wishwas* gives women who are unable to access traditional employment opportunities a space to gain financial independence – and it also serves as a safe space for those struggling with domestic abuse at home.