Edward Street Child Services

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Grants Provide Financial Assistance to Essential Worcester County Family Child Care Providers Edward Street Child Services, GWCF and Commonwealth Children's Fund Step Up to Help

WORCESTER, MA (Oct. 5, 2020) – A major portion of Worcester's child care services are offered by home-based care givers known as family child care providers, and COVID-19 has had a deleterious impact on these small businesses.

Many of these providers, who open their homes and hearts to small groups of children, were forced to temporarily cease operations earlier this year and, as a result, now face severe financial challenges. This summer, Edward Street and Greater Worcester Community Foundation collaborated with the Commonwealth Children's Fund to provide grants to 85 local, high-quality family child care providers, to help these businesses comply with the many new pandemic protocols required to safely re-open and remain a viable option for families returning to work.

"These, mostly women- and minority-owned, businesses did not have the scope of resources and support needed to navigate closures and prepare for the new re-opening regulations," said Eve Gilmore, Edward Street's Executive Director. "They operate on razor-thin margins and many are struggling to stay afloat."

This past spring, CCF recognized this unprecedented crisis and established a $1 million matching fund, the Massachusetts Family Child Care Emergency Fund, or MAFCEF, to support these critical yet fragile family child care providers. Across the Commonwealth, working through partners like Edward Street, MAFCEF matched funds from local philanthropy organizations such as GWCF to award $2,500 grants to family child care providers.

Edward Street and GWCF teamed up to lead the initiative for family child care providers in Worcester County. Edward Street called on local early education leaders including Marybeth Brown (Child Care Resources), Llanet Montoya (FCC Owner/Coach/Trainer), and Joanne Gravell (Center for Childcare Careers, Family Services of Central Mass) to inform the initiative. Toni Ostrow, Executive Administrator at Edward Street, worked directly with providers. Initial outreach was sent to more than 800 candidates in Worcester County. Approximately 130 applications were received and, of these, 85 providers met the grant criteria.

One such provider is Gina Hamilton who, after receiving the funds, wrote: "I cannot explain how much this means to me and how this gives me some room to breathe. Last night, for the first time since our mandated shut down, I slept without nightmarish dreams."

Hamilton was able to purchase critical materials, such as a tent for outside play, an ultraviolet light air purifier, disinfectant supplies, and a hand sanitizer dispenser to create a new check in station for families in order to safely re-open. She was also able to apply funds toward her past due mortgage.

These grants mean possibilities. Llanet Montoya recognizes the significance of these funds. "For a family child care educator to have access to such opportunities allows us to make a difference not only as human beings caring for others, but as small business owners. Many of the educators did not have, or had limited, opportunities to access any other financial support that was provided by the Department of Early Education and Care or the government in general. This grant relieved financial burdens for these programs, and educators have the opportunity to use the funds to cover any expenses they were having difficulties with or to support the reopening phase, to make sure they were ready with the new protocols to open their doors to the children and their families again."

"Greater Worcester Community Foundation exists to serve our community's needs and a top priority right now is high-quality child-care options," said Jonathan Cohen, Vice President for programs and strategy at the Foundation. "The MAFCEF helped leverage Foundation funds to fulfill a critical need. We harnessed the power and talent of our community to support these providers, enabling them to continue to serve children in our neighborhoods."

About Edward Street Child Services

Edward Street is a private, nonprofit agency that collaborates to improve the quality and impact of early education and care, enhancing the development of young children and strengthening families in Central Massachusetts. Learn more at *www.edwardstreet.org*.

About Greater Worcester Community Foundation

The Greater Worcester Community Foundation (GWCF) is dedicated to improving the quality of life for Central Massachusetts residents by connecting donors to high-impact nonprofit organizations and community partners. Since 1975, GWCF has worked in partnership with donors to build a $174 million endowment and award more than $142 million in grants to help transform communities and build a strong and vibrant region. We apply our knowledge, relationships, and resources to our work every day combining passion and discipline to our grantmaking. For more information, please visit *greaterworcester.org*.

About Commonwealth Children's Fund

Commonwealth Children's Fund is a philanthropic initiative whose mission is to ensure the best possible start in life for Massachusetts' youngest residents, ages 0-5, so that they may learn and thrive throughout their lives. CCF invests in Massachusetts families by providing local communities with resources to help them build a coordinated and easily-navigated system of care for all families, by investing in advocacy and public policy which advance positive and sustainable outcomes for the youngest children in Massachusetts, and by Investing in advocacy and public policy which advance positive and sustainable outcomes for the youngest children in Massachusetts. Learn more at https://www.theccfund.org/