Magnolia Community Initiative’s Pioneering Approach to Community Change Awarded $2 Million

Magnolia Community Initiative’s Pioneering Approach to Community Change Awarded $2 Million Collaborative Gift from Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and Tikun Olam Foundation.

Los Angeles, California (PRWEB) April 27, 2016 -- Magnolia Community Initiative (MCI), a groundbreaking collaborative of resource organizations and community residents working to improve the well-being and quality of life for 35,000 Los Angeles children, has through its work inspired two charitable organizations to join in a $2 million award supporting MCI. The collaborative gift was made by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, a leading national philanthropy supporting children’s well-being, and Tikun Olam Foundation, a family support organization of the Jewish Community Foundation of Los Angeles focused on supporting vulnerable children and their families.

MCI arose out of the recognition that support and service systems were failing at-risk children and families. It focuses on a 500-block area in Los Angeles as an incubator for new ideas and innovative approaches. Since its inception, MCI has grown into a nationally applicable framework for community-driven change, with more than 70 public and private organizations joining forces with parents to help thousands of children and families flourish.

“We are grateful that these two esteemed foundations recognize that Magnolia Community Initiative is transforming the way parents and local resources connect,” said Alex Morales, CEO of Children’s Bureau, one of the resource organizations participating in the effort and the lead provider of infrastructure that enables MCI’s work. “MCI is building a community that strengthens families and prepares children to succeed, and this generous collaborative grant will make it possible for us to keep changing children’s lives for the better.”

The funds will support key MCI functions, including community and leadership engagement; data collection, analysis and dissemination; inter-organizational communication; communications and community outreach; and staffing.

Gene and Mindy Stein, founders of the Tikun Olam Foundation, have been long-term supporters of Children’s Bureau and its programs. “Our missions to help vulnerable children by providing support to the child, the family and the community are very similar,” said Mindy Stein. “Tikun Olam Foundation trusts the leadership and values the vision of Magnolia Community Initiative,” added Gene Stein. “We feel that our nation will be stronger when we share resources to develop more united neighborhoods to meet the needs of vulnerable children and their families. Building a strong community provides a foundation for resilience and productive lives. MCI is creating this community.”

In continuing their support of Children’s Bureau and MCI, the Steins found synergy with Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. “As a national funder, we have become increasingly aware that in order to effect long-term improvements in population health and improve outcomes for children, it is essential to invest both in the individual lives of our youngest children and in strengthening the communities, families and systems with which they interact,” said Lola Adedokun, director of the Child Well-being Program at DDCF. “We are confident in the Magnolia Community Initiative’s ability to take on the challenge of this important work and expect that it will serve as a valuable model for communities around the country.”
Listening, Learning and Improving

MCI helps more than 70 partner organizations from across the private and public sectors work together more effectively to accomplish their mutual goal of serving vulnerable children and their families. By providing a better understanding of each partner organization’s roles to one another, MCI enables a myriad of professionals— who come together voluntarily to learn, test and practice the best ways to support the community—to link their efforts more efficiently. As a result, children and families receive the integrated care necessary to improve their overall well-being, and staff at partner organizations become more fulfilled and passionate about their work. It’s a revolutionary approach to the way organizations and families can work together to change the life trajectory of the children living in these 500 blocks.

“MCI is a true learning community, where key lessons are continually integrated into processes, practices and testing,” said Lila Guirguis, MCI’s director. “Our success stems from the ability of the partner organizations to go beyond their direct services and engage each other’s expertise in meeting the needs of families in a compassionate, holistic way.”

For example, staff at MCI partner organizations have the opportunity to participate in an eight-month Fellowship Program aimed at personal and professional development. Ernie Yoshikawa, Senior Manager-Children and Families Service Division, Koreatown Youth + Community Center in Los Angeles, says the MCI Fellowship helped him to reflect on how to better himself and the families he serves, and to make adjustments to how he works.

“As an agency, we are committed to being a part of MCI, especially the community meetings with residents. We see our partnership with MCI as long term and one that will have a meaningful impact on the community,” said Yoshikawa.

Impact Profile: Blanca’s Story

One way MCI works to improve lives is to build confidence in parents and instill the importance of developing and maintaining social connections and relationships. Blanca Montes, a single mother of five who has lived in the community for over 32 years, grew up without a mother and is keenly aware of how that missing connection affected her childhood.

“I don’t want my children to experience detachment from me. I want them to know that I love them and that I want them to become successful in everything they do,” said Montes.

She is part of MCI’s Safe Passages project, a partnership with the Los Angeles Police Department that trains parent volunteers to be safety monitors at key locations around the local elementary school. The group ensures children and families have safe walkways to and from school. Blanca helped to lead a fundraiser at the school to support the fees for getting parents cleared to participate. She also attends community group meetings at the school and at Magnolia Place Family Center, one of several hubs of Magnolia Community Initiative. Safe Passages is but one of numerous MCI projects that bring the community together to strengthen vulnerable families.

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ABOUT CHILDREN’S BUREAU
Since 1904, Children's Bureau has been a nonprofit leader in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect. More than 30,000 children and families are helped each year throughout Southern California with services that include school readiness, parenting classes, family resource centers, support groups, mental health counseling, foster care and adoption. Children’s Bureau is one of the largest investors in child abuse prevention in the country and is pioneering an approach to transform an entire at-risk community through its Magnolia Community Initiative. To learn more about Children’s Bureau, visit www.all4kids.org.

ABOUT MAGNOLIA COMMUNITY INITIATIVE
Magnolia Community Initiative (MCI) is a pioneering collaborative effort to reimagine how resource providers, communities and parents can collaborate to strengthen families and prepare children to succeed. MCI combines an understanding of what is necessary to improve a child’s well-being with expertise in how to evolve complex, multi-service systems. Focusing on a 500-block area in Los Angeles as a proving ground, MCI is developing effective, sustainable strategies to build a community that supports strong, stable and nurturing families. MCI is currently featured in a discussion guide and series of videos developed by the United States Children’s Bureau called, “Building Communities, Building Hope,” which encourages communities across the country to begin a conversation and build commitment to how society can and should work collaboratively to help vulnerable children live free of abuse and neglect. To learn more about MCI, visit www.magnoliaplacela.org.

ABOUT DORIS DUKE CHARITABLE FOUNDATION
The mission of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (DDCF) is to improve the quality of people’s lives through grants supporting the performing arts, environmental conservation, medical research and child well-being, and through preservation of the cultural and environmental legacy of Doris Duke’s properties. The foundation’s Child Well-being Program aims to promote children’s healthy development and protect them from abuse and neglect. To learn more about the program, visit www.ddcf.org.

ABOUT TIKUN OLAM FOUNDATION / JEWISH COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
The Tikun Olam Foundation (meaning healing the world in Hebrew) focuses on early childhood care and development by providing support to vulnerable children, their families, and their communities. It is a family support organization of the Jewish Community Foundation of Los Angeles, which manages charitable assets for more than 1,200 families, and partners with them to shape meaningful philanthropic strategies and magnify the impact of their giving.
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