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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Community Foundation Funds Award \$108,000 in Workforce Development and Early Literacy Grants

The Community Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts (CFSEMA) recently awarded \$108,000 in workforce development and early literacy grants with funding from the Polaroid and Acushnet Foundation Funds.

“These grants are part of our ongoing strategy to fund programs that are working to increase the region’s historically low levels of educational attainment,” said CFSEMA President Craig J. Dutra.

Six local organizations received a total of \$100,000 in grants from the Polaroid Fund for workforce development programs, with an emphasis on advocacy and capacity building, as well as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Adult Basic Education (ABE), and General Education Development (GED) classes. They are:

- **Bristol Community College**, \$25,000 for “Accessing the Workplace: A Bilingual Certificate Program” which will provide nationally recognized certificates in: Digital Literacy or Personal Care Assistance (PCA); occupational training paired with literacy skills; and advising/mentoring for tutoring, career development and counseling. BCC is working in collaboration with UMass Workers Education Program and the Greater New Bedford Career Center
- **Catholic Social Services**, \$15,000 for "Future Education and Adult Literacy" to provide ESOL classes for Portuguese and Spanish-speaking adults, as well as instruction in literacy, English and Civics, and job readiness and training for citizenship.
- **Community Economic Development Corp.**, \$18,000 for “Workforce Development Organizing and Advocacy,” a collaborative advocacy campaign (local and state level) to redress provider shortages and to increase opportunities for ESOL and adult basic education, expanded legal services and to improve public transportation
- **Immigrants Assistance Center**, \$20,000 for “ESOL classes with citizenship preparation” for Portuguese and Spanish native speakers, along with public policy advocacy.
- **Mass. Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA)**, \$10,000 for the "*English Works*/New Bedford Campaign,” launched last summer to increase business investment in ESOL, support and advocate for a public policy agenda supporting immigrant workers and employing businesses, and increase ESOL provider capacity. *English Works* is a statewide coalition of business, labor, community and civic leaders, educators and advocates
- **United Interfaith Action**, \$12,000 for an “Immigrant Training and Organization Project” to strengthen local organizing committees to include recent immigrants, build coalition partnerships within a wider community, and advocate at the state level to increase funding for ABE/ESOL.

An additional \$8,000 was awarded by the Acushnet Foundation Fund to **Catholic Social Services** to expand and continue its Early Literacy Program, which integrates early literacy programming for children birth to three years old with ESOL and parenting courses for homeless at-risk families living at CSS’ Donovan House.

In 2006, the Community Foundation began managing the New Bedford Area grant program of the Polaroid Fund, a discretionary fund of the Boston Foundation. The Polaroid Fund distributes up to \$100,000 each year to support organizations or collaboratives that focus on workforce development, with an emphasis on English literacy (ESOL) and adult education (ABE and GED) courses

About the Community Foundation

Since 1995, area residents have been turning to the Community Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts to make their philanthropic giving as effective as possible. CFSEMA is a public charity serving thousands of people who share a common concern – improving the quality of life in Southeastern Massachusetts.

While the Foundation's primary grantmaking focus is on the SouthCoast communities of Greater New Bedford, Greater Fall River, and Greater Plymouth County, CFSEMA is a regional foundation serving 41 cities and towns. To date, the Community Foundation has distributed over \$8 million from 127 funds to humanitarian, educational and cultural organizations in the region. . More information about the Foundation can be found at www.cfsema.org.

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