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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Community Foundation Funds Award \$112,500 in Workforce Development and Early Literacy Grants**

The Community Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts (CFSEMA) recently awarded \$112,500 in workforce development and early literacy grants with funding from the Polaroid and Acushnet Foundation Funds.

This is the Community Foundation's 5<sup>th</sup> year of managing the New Bedford Area grants program of the Polaroid Fund under contract with the Boston Foundation. The Polaroid Fund distributes up to \$100,000 each year to support organizations or collaboratives that focus on workforce development and early literacy. CFSEMA's Acushnet Foundation Fund also provides up to \$12,500 for early literacy programming.

"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.

Seven local organizations received a total of \$87,500 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**, \$15,000 for "Bridging ESOL to eLearning" which will provide nationally recognized Personal Care Assistant (PCA) training and ESOL specific to PCA courses.
- **Catholic Social Services**, \$15,000 for "Future Education and Adult Literacy" to provide instruction in literacy, English and Civics, along with one-on-one tutoring /classes for all levels of ESOL/ABE for Portuguese and Spanish speakers.
- **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, expand legal services and to improve public transportation.
- **Immigrants Assistance Center**, \$18,000 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." The *English Works* Campaign is a statewide coalition of business, labor and community leaders who advocate on a local and state level to increase provider capacity and business investment in ESOL.
- **New Bedford/Dept. of Community Services**, \$1,500 for "Shining Lights ESOL: Community Literacy Project," to purchase materials needed to develop a curriculum that will be distributed to ESOL providers.
- **United Interfaith Action**, \$10,000 for an "Immigrant Training and Organization Project" to empower new leadership within recent immigrant communities and advocate at the state level to increase funding for ABE/ESOL.

An additional \$25,000 was awarded by the Acushnet Foundation and Polaroid Funds to three Early Literacy Programs:

- **ArtWorks!**, \$11,000 for “Learning Studio,” which will integrate parenting skills that increase early literacy skills through art projects, and work with United Front Homes/UMass Dartmouth to provide ABE/ESOL through interactive art experiences.
- **Catholic Social Services**, \$5,000 to 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.
- **PACE/Family Center**, \$9,000 for its “Family Center Literacy Program,” which integrates an adult literacy/ESOL program with parenting and early literacy skills.

**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. Over the past five years, the Community Foundation has distributed more than \$8 million in grants and program support from 130 funds to humanitarian, educational and cultural organizations in the region. . More information about the Foundation can be found at [www.cfsema.org](http://www.cfsema.org).

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