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NEWS RELEASE

June 10, 2011

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St. Louis Women Celebrate Five Years of Giving!
Spirit of St. Louis (SOS) Women's Fund Awards \$209,500 in
Charitable Grants to 13 St. Louis Area Nonprofit Organizations

Total Grants Top \$900,000, Bucking Stagnant National Grant-Making Trend

ST. LOUIS – National grant-making trends detailed in the *Foundation Growth and Giving Estimates, Current Outlook* report from the Foundation Center¹ (issued April 2011) show charitable foundation giving in the United States was stagnant between 2009 and 2010. Yet for the fifth consecutive year, coinciding with its fifth anniversary, the Spirit of St. Louis (SOS) Women's Fund has increased annual giving to the St. Louis community.

SOS recently awarded grants totaling \$209,500 to 13 nonprofits, a 4.75 percent increase over 2010 grant awards. Since its founding in 2006, SOS has awarded \$909,500 in 64 grants to support 41 grassroots nonprofits across metro St. Louis. Grants were presented at a ceremony held in conjunction with the Annual Meeting of SOS on June 2, 2011 at which Deborah Godwin, associate director of the St. Louis Community College (STLCC) Foundation, served as keynote speaker. Since 1999, the STLCC Foundation has awarded more than \$1 million in scholarships to more than 8,000 students.

In 2011, 124 St. Louis-area organizations requested grants exceeding a total of \$4.3 million from SOS. The 2011 grant recipients, their mission and their grant awards follow:

- Aim High St. Louis offers a tuition-free academic enrichment program to empower and motivate high-risk, low-income middle school students; \$25,000.
- Almost Home provides housing, life skills and training to previously homeless teenage mothers and their children seeking to break the cycle of poverty; \$10,000.
- The Belle Center promotes a progressive, family-centered inclusive approach to education and community life that supports children with severe disabilities; \$12,000.
- Gateway Greening promotes urban neighborhood vitality and stability, healthy living and quality of life through community food projects, education and wellness programs; \$25,000.

¹ Source: <http://foundationcenter.org/media/news/20110407.html>

- **Gateway to Hope** arranges breast cancer treatment for uninsured and underinsured individuals who are not eligible for publicly funded treatment programs; \$7,500.
- **Let's Start** assists women and the children and families of women transitioning from life in prison back into society; \$15,000.
- **The Little Bit Foundation** builds partnerships with St. Louis schools to provide essential support to disadvantaged children; \$20,000.
- **Lydia's House** helps victims of domestic violence with transitional housing, community resources and long-term planning for education, employment, childcare and housing; \$20,000.
- **Project Backpack** provides backpacks filled with personal necessities and comfort items to children removed from their homes due to neglect and domestic violence; \$15,000.
- **South Side Day Nursery** offers year-round childcare, educational services and support to improve the health and development of economically disadvantaged children and their families; \$20,000.
- **St. Louis Health Equipment Lending Program (HELP)** provides individuals with mobility problems and disabilities access to free assistive technology medical equipment; \$10,000.
- **Volunteers in Medicine** provides free clinics to serve the uninsured and underinsured in St. Charles and Lincoln counties; \$20,000.
- **Walker Scottish Rite Clinic for Childhood Language Disorder** teaches two- through six-year-old children with speech and language disorders communication skills needed to succeed in life; \$10,000.

Intensive application reviews and onsite visits are part of the group's member-driven selection process. Organizations that meet the high standards of SOS are voted on (one member-one vote) to ensure equal and fair selection.

Founded in 2006, the Spirit of St. Louis (SOS) Women's Fund connects women across the St. Louis region to collectively strengthen the community through informed, focused grant-making. The group, a component fund of the **Greater Saint Louis Community Foundation**, has more than 200 members. Each member contributes \$1,200 a year, with 90 percent of all member gifts directed to fund grants. In 2011, SOS achieved the \$909,500 milestone in charitable giving with a total of 64 grants to 41 area nonprofit organizations over a span of five years. To learn more or join SOS, visit www.soswomensfund.org or call (314) 880-4968.

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Editor's note: The **Spirit of St. Louis (SOS) Women's Fund** is located at the **Greater St. Louis Community Foundation** at 319 N. 4th St. in St. Louis, Mo. (63102).



The 200-plus members of the **Spirit of St. Louis (SOS) Women's Fund** awarded charitable grants totaling \$209,500 to 13 St. Louis-area nonprofit organizations at its fifth annual grant awards ceremony on June 2, 2011. Representatives from each organization gather for a quick photo with SOS leadership. Since its founding in 2006, SOS has awarded \$909,500 in 64 grants to support 41 nonprofit groups.



Dennis Woldum and **Mara Higdon** (center, from left), both of **Gateway Greening**, smile with **SOS** President **Vicki Sheehan** (far left) and **SOS** Grant-making Chair **Felice Joyce** (far right). Gateway Greening received a \$25,000 grant from SOS.



(from left) **Rhonda Gray** of **Almost Home** mingles with **Shirley Lester** and **Annetta Williams**, both of **Let's Start**. Almost Home received a \$10,000 grant from **SOS**; Let's Start received a \$15,000 grant.



(from left) **Holly Swift** and **Lainey Miazga**, both of **The Belle Center**, meet with **SOS** member **Susan Lipstein**. The Belle Center received a \$12,000 grant from SOS.



SOS Founder **Shelby Schagrín** (center) with **SOS** board members **Dorte Probstein** (far left) and **Mary Schoolman** (far right) before the annual grant awards ceremony begins.



(from left) **SOS** board members **Gwen Wesley** and **Terry Bernstein** at **SOS'** fifth annual grant awards ceremony.