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The Lenny Zakim Fund announces more than $180,000 in COVID-19 emergency grants

BOSTON – The Lenny Zakim Fund (LZF) announced $186,225 in grants from its COVID-19 Emergency Response and Recovery Fund to help grassroots nonprofits across Eastern Massachusetts address the needs of communities struggling during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 Emergency Response and Recovery Fund was created to provide critical emergency funding to current and former LZF grant recipients to help maintain staff, services, and programs. Emergency funding included a priority focus on food insecurity, housing insecurity, health accessibility, undocumented immigrants and refugees, domestic violence, and criminal justice.

As communities throughout Massachusetts reel from the challenges of COVID-19, those who experience discrimination and financial insecurity in the “best of times” are now more vulnerable than ever. To-date, LZF has raised a total of $315,000 for its COVID-19 Emergency Response and Recovery Fund and will award at least two additional rounds of emergency funding to current and former grantees. Applications for the second round will be due on June 15th, to be distributed by July 1st.

The latest round of grants will go to 29 nonprofit agencies - 2/3 of which are led by people of color - and range from $2,000 to $10,000 in unrestricted funds. In March, LZF fast-tracked its annual grantmaking process totaling $576,000 in grants to 56 community organizations who work at bridging inequities throughout the Commonwealth.

Executive Director Eric Esteves acknowledged LZF’s unique mission and values: “With these emergency grants, we’re helping nonprofits in our communities provide immediate relief to those who’ve been hit the hardest. The Lenny Zakim Fund has historically supported grassroots leaders operating "below the radar screen" who are focused on social, racial, and economic justice. This year marks LZF’s 25th anniversary and the pandemic’s stark disparities has made it clear that the issues these grassroots organizations work on are now even more urgent than ever before. The global pandemic and our new normal has laid bare the structural inequities that exist in our society.”

In announcing the grants, LZF board chair, Suzi Kaitz, shared, “LZF is living its values through these actions -- with equity at the center of our responsiveness. Each proposal was considered with the seriousness of the moment and each request brought forth the true impact of the pandemic, the injustice of its wrath, and the pain it has wrought in the very communities LZF serves. We had to make difficult choices.”
About The Lenny Zakim Fund

Established in 1995 by the late civil rights leader Lenny Zakim, the Lenny Zakim Fund continues to reflect his work and ideals by providing financial support, education, technical assistance and networking opportunities to small, community-based organizations and individuals who are passionate about social, racial, and economic justice and determined to become vehicles of critical change. Since its founding, LZF has awarded over 1,300 grants and nearly $9 million. The Lenny Zakim Fund knows grassroots leadership is integral to ensuring that programs are successful, culturally relevant, effective, and meet the needs of affected people. Social justice at The Lenny Zakim Fund is about more than just grantmaking – it is about coming together in partnership to support leaders and the grassroots in their work against systemic oppression and their fight for equity.

COVID-19 Emergency Response and Recovery Fund Grant Recipients:

- African Cultural Services (Waltham)
- Asian Women for Health (Statewide)
- Black Economic Justice Institute (Boston)
- Boston Cancer Support (Statewide)
- Boston Missionary Baptist Community Center (Boston)
- Boston Youth Wrestling (Boston/Chelsea/Lynn)
- Brazilian Worker Center (Greater Boston)
- Building Bridges Through Music (Lynn)
- Chica Project (Boston/Lynn/Lawrence)
- Community Cooks (Somerville)
- Hawthorne Youth and Community Center (Boston)
- Healthy Waltham
- Hebron Food Pantry (Attleboro)
- Immigrant Family Services Center (Boston)
- Institute for Pan African Cultural Education (Boston)
- Kids in Tech (Lowell)
- Level Ground Mixed Martial Arts (Boston)
- Lucy’s Love Bus (Amesbury)
- Lynn Youth Street Outreach Advocacy
- Neighbors United for a Better East Boston
- PieRSquared (Boston)
- Refugee Immigration Ministry (Eastern MA)
- Saheli (Burlington/Greater Boston)
- Southcoast LGBTQ Network (New Bedford)
- The Boston Project Ministries (Boston)
- The Haven Project (Lynn)
- The Welcome Project (Somerville)
- We Are Better Together (Boston)
- Worcester Interfaith

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