

## Twin Ports Women's Foundation – June 2020

**Board Members** – Denise Bussa – chair, Karis Boerner, Robin Brown, Lynnea Emerson and Laura Weintraub

### **Unprecedented Times**

We have been living in unprecedented times and 2020 has been a year like no other. The board of the Twin Ports Women's Foundation is excited about moving ahead, anticipating an even more successful 2<sup>nd</sup> grant cycle in 2021.

We missed out on celebrating our first donations. We made donations to Safe Haven and the YMCA in the amounts of \$xxxx each. Those funds arrived just as the COVID-19 pandemic arrived. They were put to good use at a time when these organizations needed them the most. We asked each organization to let us know how COVID has affected them:

### **From Brittany Robb, Executive Director of Safe Haven Shelter and Resource Center**

A lot of wonderful folks have asked me how things have changed at Safe Haven since COVID-19 set its sights on our community. There is much to be said about what our work looks like now compared to just three, short months ago:

While so many of our friends and neighbors in the nonprofit community closed their doors, we continued to welcome victims and survivors into both our Shelter and Resource Center locations. As a designated "tier 2 essential service", domestic violence programs throughout the state of Minnesota who provide emergency protections including shelter services and Orders for Protection are required to remain operational regardless of what's happening outside of our doors. Because of the nimbleness of our team, we were able to act quickly to respond to the increased calls for support as survivors recognized their circumstances were about to become even more dire as "stay at home" directives were implemented which inadvertently allowed abusive partners the freedom to further exert their control. Our staff became even more adept at tuning into the subtle cues in crisis calls to formulate thoughtful safety plans with survivors to plan for their well-being while at home with their partners. Our team responded swiftly in reaching out to essential businesses and healthcare facilities to share our contact information broadly in grocery store bathrooms and on gas station community boards where survivors may have their only opportunity to be separated from their abusers. At both the Shelter and Resource Center we developed procedures and protocol to ensure adequate social-distancing, cleaning and sanitizing measures were taken to keep all of our clients and staff healthy and well. We worked diligently with our partners and local businesses to provide additional shelter space off-site for symptomatic shelter guests in need of isolation while they recover.

Some of the key pieces of our advocacy work have changed in ways that we couldn't have imagined in pre-COVID times, and we are grateful for the experience of having to push the boundaries of how we reach survivors. We have connected to those we serve via online support groups using a variety of web-based conferencing platforms to stay in touch and provide the after-care work so many have come to rely on during their new life post-separation. Our children's and youth advocacy has changed to focus on "whole family advocacy" for the little ones living in the shelter with their moms, and for the older kids in the community who would typically be participating in our mentoring program, we are reaching them through weekly mailings that include empowering activities, self-care style "make and takes", and

personalized notes from our staff. We continue to provide trainings for groups large and small via webinars and have relied on our growing network of email and social media contacts to ensure the message resonates throughout the community that we aren't going anywhere!

Like any trauma that befalls those we serve, they survive. And they teach us how to survive. And they, and we, are going to be okay.

**From Anika Thompson, Community Engagement and Development Associate  
Duluth Area Family YMCA**

With the mandated closure of fitness facilities on March 18<sup>th</sup>, the Duluth Area Family met the challenge head-on and refocused our efforts to where we were most needed within our community. As the Y, we are sometimes best known for our swim lessons or as health and wellness experts, but since the Covid-19 pandemic closed our doors, we have shown that our mission expands well beyond the confines of our physical building. Our mission-driven services continued, expanded, and adapted to meet the growing needs this new challenge presented. As the needs continue to shift each day, the Y continues to be flexible and innovative as we make a positive impact for those who needed us the most in our community. Through the generosity of our members, community, and partners, the Y has helped keep youth, families, and individuals safe and supported during this difficult time.

At the Y, we are dedicated to ensuring our member and the community stay healthy while safe at home. Through free virtual wellness offerings that are available to all of our community, we are keeping families, seniors, and individuals active, engaged, and thriving. This work included creating a sense of belonging through wellness-check calls with our senior members to provide them with social connection as well as connect them to critical government and nonprofit community services.

As an expansion of our youth development work, we partnered with the school district from March 18<sup>th</sup> to June 5<sup>th</sup> and managed the Duluth Public Schools and Duluth Edison Charter Schools emergency childcare for essential workers out of 5 condensed sites of Lowell, Congdon, Laura MacArthur, Raleigh, and North Star Elementary. These programs supported our region's essential workers by creating fun and engaging programming, where students spent time playing outside, completing their distanced learning, and exploring new hobbies and skills while following best practices for health and safety. As part of our ongoing youth development programming, we will continue to serve youth through our Day Camp and summer offerings now that the school year is officially at an end. In addition to meeting childcare needs for school aged youth, our Early Childhood Development Centers in Hermantown and Grand Marais, remained open and serving the families who needed this critical support while instituting best practices for the safety and health of all we serve.

Our commitment to meeting the food access needs of our youth continued despite Covid-19 and we redoubled our efforts with the understanding that this crisis would amplify existing food insecurities for underserved neighborhoods. Over the past two months, we have facilitated Emergency Food Distribution and we have been working with many of our existing partners and developed new community partners to provide grab-and-go meal bags out of the Gary New Duluth Recreation Center and the Harbor Highlands Community Center, Cook County Community YMCA, and the YMCA at the Essentia Wellness Center. Grab-and-go bags, include nutritious items for lunch and breakfast as well as partner donated books, activity sheets, and other necessary supplies for families. During the first month just at Harbor Highland and GND alone, we gave out a total of 2,698 meals and we have seen an increase need for this service. As part of our ongoing food access programming, we will continue to handout meal bags until the end of the summer.

Now, as we look toward reopening, our cause remains within our community. Though it looks a little

different, at its core, what we are doing today is what we do every day. We continue to meet the important needs of our youth, families, individuals, and seniors. With our community partners, we will continue to help break down barriers so all can be successful now at this challenging time and in years to come. As we look to the future, we are excited. We have learned so much as we adjusted what we've always done to meet the new needs of our community. There is more work for us to do and we are so grateful to you for joining with us to make more possible for all in our region.

### **Membership Renewal**

Membership renewal is due by December 31, 2020. Current members do not have to provide additional demographic information. Simply 'renew' with your name. Check donations can be sent to:

Twin Ports Women's Foundation  
c/o St. Paul & Minnesota Foundation  
101 Fifth Street E., Suite 2400  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101

Credit card payments can be made by calling Deepti at the SPMF, 651-325-4282. Again, simply provide her with your name if all of the information we have remains current.

You can also make installment payments if that is easier on your budget.

We will have a membership drive/educational program this fall. These may take different forms depending on how the pandemic continues to affect our community.

### **Being Part of the Twin Ports Women's Foundation**

After a highly successful initial year, Twin Ports Women's Foundation (TPWF), is enthusiastically inviting additional members to become part of a contributing, caring and community process.

As a TPWF member you make a difference within your own community through the concept of collective giving. Your contribution is a part of the pie empowering you with an opportunity to nominate and vote for local nonprofit agencies in need. The bigger the pie, the bigger the awards and the greater impact and accomplishment acquired within your own the community.

To supplement your philanthropic rewards, a TPWF membership provides you:

- Participation in the grants process via nomination and voting privileges as directed by the Board.
- Opportunity to join the grants committee for direct involvement on planning and process development.
- Attendance at educational events.
- Participation in annual events and award ceremonies.

Please share the following with friends, colleagues, family, neighbors, etc. For more information on becoming a Twin Ports Women's Foundation member, go to [www.twinportswomensfoundation.com](http://www.twinportswomensfoundation.com) and click on Join Us.

### **Volunteer Opportunities**

We have recruited one new board member, Robin Brown. With one resignation and one addition, the board of the TPWF remains at 5. We'd like to add a couple of additional board members if we could. Please get in touch with any board member for additional information or email [info@twinportswomensfoundation.com](mailto:info@twinportswomensfoundation.com). We are also starting up the Grants Committee and have one volunteer thus far, Julie Zaruba Fountaine. Thank you, Julie.

**Thank you for your membership in the Twin Ports Women's Foundation!**