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2006 Lilly Endowment annual report highlights renewal programs

The notion of renewal – of having the chance to step away from one’s daily responsibilities to gain new perspectives – is the theme of the 2006 annual report of Lilly Endowment Inc. The Endowment administers or funds renewal programs for schoolteachers, principals, guidance counselors, ministers, youth workers, artists and arts administrators, and human service professionals.

The Endowment recognizes that the success of its grantmaking depends on the energy, vision, abilities, talents and commitment of the people who actually do the work in the programs it funds.

As the report notes, all these renewal recipients are “critical players in education, religion and community development, the key areas of interest the Endowment’s founders articulated when they founded the Endowment 70 years ago. The support we have provided for their renewal and reflection has been leveraged many times over through more enthusiastic teaching, more vibrant congregations, more effective social and youth work and more creative art.”

“With the fast pace of change and the time pressures of contemporary life, many of these dedicated professionals do not feel they can take time for rest and renewal. Even if they get over the hurdle of admitting that they need some time away, few are compensated at levels that provide the financial wherewithal to do so to any meaningful extent,” the report states.

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The “grandfather” of all these renewal programs is the Teacher Creativity Fellowship Program which began in 1987. Nearly 1,700 teachers, principals, media specialists and guidance counselors have benefited since then. The “payback” for the teachers is renewed enthusiasm for their work, and they “pay it forward” with refreshed teaching and lively and creative projects for their students.

The Creative Renewal Fellowship Program, funded by the Endowment, is administered by the Arts Council of Indianapolis. Since 1998, 200 central Indiana artists and arts administrators have been selected to participate. Many of them say that the program has changed their lives, enlivened the artistic community in Indianapolis, and opened up networks of artists that interconnect in unexpected ways.

“These fellowships are an investment in individual artists that help them rediscover their passion, imagination and creativity,” says Greg Charleston, president of the council. “This program has contributed to the development of a real artist community here. It has created new synergies and collaborations.”

The United Way of Central Indiana has administered the Human Service Professional Renewal Program since 2001, and 125 persons have been the beneficiaries. These are the caretakers and caregivers on the front lines who work often sight unseen in the hundreds of nonprofit organizations throughout central Indiana. “Our human service professionals are very mission-driven people who live and breathe their work,” says Ellen K. Annala, UWCI president and CEO. “Right from the beginning we try to recognize and honor their work by announcing the recipients at a big gathering. It’s gratifying to observe many of them ‘walking a little taller’ after having their life’s work acknowledged.”

“Professionals who work with youth are like sponges,” says Janet Wakefield, executive director of Community Partnerships with Youth, home of the Journey Fellowship. This program, which began in 2002, gives youth workers the gift of time to focus on personal and professional growth. A two-track effort targets prospective youth workers and veteran professionals.

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“Too often, the people who do this work are nearly invisible to society. When they begin the fellowship many youth workers say they feel alone, sometimes ready to leave the field they love,” says Wakefield. “After the fellowship year, most participants say they feel more connected to their colleagues across the state and more committed to their profession.”

High on the list of those who need time to get away, spend time with family, and reconnect with their professional instincts are pastors. The Endowment administers two programs, one for Indiana congregations and one for congregations in the rest of the country. Pastors often keep 24/7 schedules, are expected to be on hand for church and community activities, run youth programs, raise money, and be with people at the best and worst times of their lives. The application for the Endowment’s clergy renewal programs asks them to think about “what makes their heart sing.” The application requires an intense collaboration between the pastor and the congregation, and the result of the renewal is often a mutually successful venture.

The Endowment also encourages pastoral renewal through more than 50 other programs designed to reinvigorate pastors so they return from brief sabbaticals refreshed and ready to continue leading vibrant congregations. The mid-career breaks are not conventional vacations but are periods of reflection and exploration aimed at sparking new enthusiasm for the ministry. The annual report highlights one such program, Women Touched By Grace, administered by Our Lady of Grace Monastery near Indianapolis. The Catholic community of nuns hosts the “time out” program for Protestant female pastors.

It is worthwhile to note that, in light of the sometimes multimillion dollar grants the Endowment makes, the funding for these programs is relatively modest. The renewal fellowships for teachers, artists and human service workers are \$8,000; up to \$45,000 is available for pastors and their congregations.

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On the financial front, the Endowment posted assets of \$7.6 billion at the end of 2006. The Endowment paid grants totaling \$346.6 million, with Education Division grants of \$164.4 million (47 percent), Religion Division grants of \$123.7 million (36 percent), and Community Development Division grants of \$58.5 million (17 percent).

In 2006 the Endowment approved grants totaling \$310.1 million to 657 grantees. The Education and Religion divisions accounted for the most dollars approved, \$124.8 million and \$124.6 million, respectively, and represented 80 percent of the grants approved. The Community Development Division approved-grants totaled \$60.7 million or 20 percent.

In both categories, most of the funds were awarded to Indiana charitable organizations: \$207.6 million (60 percent) of grants paid and \$170 million (55 percent) of grants approved.

In the report the Endowment addresses the recent change in its investment philosophy. "From its beginning in 1937, the Endowment has held virtually all its investments in Eli Lilly and Company stock," it states. "In July it announced plans for a partial diversification of its Lilly stock holdings and stated that it expects by 2010 to build a more diversified portfolio of about \$2 billion while continuing to hold as its primary investment shares of Lilly stock that were donated to it by its founders. The diversified portfolio will be funded from proceeds from sales of Lilly stock. By the end of 2006, the Endowment had invested \$100 million in index funds managed by Vanguard."