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San Francisco and Oakland Nonprofits Episcopal Community Services of San Francisco and The Unity Council Awarded \$400,000 from Bank of America

Neighborhood Builder awards will help scale programs addressing systemic challenges to sustainable employment and displacement

San Francisco, CA – Two high impact San Francisco-East Bay area nonprofits – Episcopal Community Services of San Francisco and The Unity Council – have been named as the 2018 Bank of America Neighborhood Builders® award recipients for their work serving individuals struggling with employment, homelessness and the high cost of living in gentrifying communities. As part of the award, the largest philanthropic investment into nonprofit leadership development in the nation, the nonprofits will each receive \$200,000 in unrestricted grant funding to expand their successful programs with at risk populations.

While the greater Bay Area is experiencing unprecedented growth, the economic boom has also had an unfortunate impact on many hyper local neighborhoods, lower income households and small businesses experiencing displacement due to rising costs of living, evolving job skill requirements and overall gentrification. The Bay Area has also seen a corresponding rise in homelessness with an estimated 13,000 homeless people in San Francisco and Alameda Counties. These factors coupled with some of the nation's highest housing costs – market rate rents in Oakland, alone, have increased at more than twice the rate of incomes over the past ten years, for example – puts additional stress on individuals and families struggling to make ends meet.

Both The Unity Council and Episcopal Community Services are organizations that stress comprehensive solutions, rather than quick fixes – ranging from job training and career counseling to transitional housing and wraparound services – to help people find and maintain stable employment and housing.

“As the cost of living skyrockets and the job market becomes even more specialized, we need to find ways for all residents to be able to continue calling the San Francisco-East Bay ‘home’ and not get displaced. The Unity Council and Episcopal Community Services are helping vulnerable people attain stability and success through sustainable careers, education, and the preservation of affordable housing,” said Gioia McCarthy, Bank of America market president for the San Francisco–East Bay. “The Neighborhood Builders program will help scale their important work on behalf of even more individuals, families and neighborhoods that make our communities so vibrant and unique.”

Since 1982, Episcopal Community Services has provided essential services to homeless San Franciscans, utilizing a holistic approach that addresses the multiple causes leading to homelessness. Episcopal Community Services serves more than 7,000 people a year, guided by a mission to help homeless and very low-income people every day and every night obtain the housing, jobs, shelter, and essential services each person needs to prevent and end homelessness. The grant funds will be used to expand successful programs such as CHEFS, an 8-week culinary training program that enables individuals to find gainful employment in the food service industry.

“We are truly honored to receive the Bank of America’s distinguished Neighborhood Builders Award, recognizing ECS’s significant strides toward greater innovation in addressing the multiple complexities inherent in our efforts to end homelessness in this community,” said Beth Stokes, Executive Director of Episcopal Community Services. “This award and recognition supports ECS’s continued drive for solutions in addressing homelessness, the defining issue for the city of San Francisco.”

The Unity Council is a non-profit Social Equity Development Corporation with a 50-year history in the Fruitvale neighborhood of Oakland. Their holistic programs and services reach more than 8,000 individuals and families annually, in five languages, with programs ranging from early childhood education and youth mentorship to housing affordability efforts and senior citizen services. Funds from the Neighborhood Builders award will enable the Unity Council to expand these effective programs and further establish solutions for economic growth that encourage active participation in the community’s growth and empowerment to avoid displacement.

“The Unity Council is in a battle right now, fighting against the displacement of historic communities of color from their long-time neighborhoods. We thank Bank of America for standing with us in our efforts to create effective comprehensive solutions for fighting poverty and growing thriving communities,” said Chris Iglesias, CEO of The Unity Council. “We can only win this fight by addressing the needs of our community on an individual, family, and neighborhood level.”

As Neighborhood Builder awardees, Episcopal Community Services and the Unity Council will also both receive a year of leadership training for their Executive Director and an emerging leader at the organization, access to a network of peer organizations across the U.S., and the opportunity to access additional capital to expand their impact.

Over the course of Neighborhood Builders’ 15 years, Bank of America has partnered with 47 nonprofits in the San Francisco-East Bay, investing \$9.4 million to help address issues fundamental to improving economic mobility for individuals and families.

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