



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **FriendshipWorks Awarded \$500,000 Cummings Grant** *Boston nonprofit receives 10 years of funding from Cummings Foundation*

**Boston MAY 26, 2023** – FriendshipWorks is one of 150 local nonprofits that will share in \$30 million through Cummings Foundation’s major annual grants program. The Boston-based organization was selected from a total of 630 applicants during a competitive review process. It will receive \$500,000 over 10 years.

FriendshipWorks’ mission is to reduce social isolation, enhance the quality of life, and preserve the dignity of older adults in Greater Boston. The organization recruits and trains volunteers of all ages, faiths, and backgrounds who provide friendship, advocacy, education, assistance, and emotional support to approximately 1,300 elders in Boston, Brookline, Newton, Somerville, and Cambridge each year.

“With the recent Advisory from the U.S. Surgeon General about the devastating impact that loneliness and social isolation can have on physical and mental health, creating social connections for elders is more important than ever,” says Janet Seckel-Cerrotti, Executive Director. “With this award from Cummings Foundation, FriendshipWorks will be able to continue providing much-needed companionship and support to isolated older adults throughout Greater Boston so they can stay connected, healthy, and thrive in their neighborhoods.” Adds Seckel-Cerrotti, “Cummings understands how significant, multiple-year investments can assure nonprofits like FriendshipWorks remain viable and sustainable for future years, and we are beyond grateful for their support and belief in our important mission.”

The Cummings \$30 Million Grant Program primarily supports Massachusetts nonprofits that are based in and serve Middlesex, Essex, and Suffolk counties.

Through this place-based initiative, Cummings Foundation aims to give back in the areas where it owns commercial property. Its buildings are all managed, at no cost to the Foundation, by its affiliate, Cummings Properties. This Woburn-based commercial real

estate firm leases and manages 11 million square feet of debt-free space, the majority of which exclusively benefits the Foundation.

“The way the local nonprofit sector perseveres, steps up, and pivots to meet the shifting needs of the community is most impressive,” said Cummings Foundation executive director Joyce Vyriotes. “We are incredibly grateful for these tireless efforts to support people in the community and to increase equity and access to opportunities.”

The majority of the grant decisions were made by about 90 volunteers. They worked across a variety of committees to review and discuss the proposals and then, together, determine which requests would be funded. Among these community volunteers were business and nonprofit leaders, mayors, college presidents, and experts in areas such as finance and DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion).

“It would not be possible for the Foundation to hire the diversity and depth of expertise and insights that our volunteers bring to the process,” said Vyriotes. “We so appreciate the substantial time and thought they dedicated toward ensuring that our democratized version of philanthropy results in equitable outcomes that will really move the needle on important issues in local communities.”

The Foundation and volunteers first identified 150 organizations to receive three-year grants of up to \$225,000 each. The winners included first-time recipients as well as nonprofits that had previously received Cummings grants. Twenty-five of this latter group of repeat recipients were then selected by a volunteer panel to have their grants elevated to 10-year awards ranging from \$300,000 to \$1 million each.

This year’s grant recipients represent a wide variety of causes, including housing and food insecurity, workforce development, immigrant services, social justice, education, and mental health services. The nonprofits are spread across 46 different cities and towns.

Cummings Foundation has now awarded \$480 million to greater Boston nonprofits. The complete list of this year’s 150 grant winners, plus nearly 1,500 previous recipients, is available at [www.CummingsFoundation.org](http://www.CummingsFoundation.org).



***(Left to Right) Patty Catalano, FriendshipWorks' Director of Development & Communications, Janet Seckel-Cerrotti, FriendshipWorks' Executive Director, Robert Keefe, Cummings Foundation***

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### **About FriendshipWorks:**

*Founded in 1984, the mission of [FriendshipWorks](http://www.friendshipworks.org) is to reduce social isolation, enhance the quality of life, and preserve the dignity of older adults in Greater Boston. FriendshipWorks accomplishes this by recruiting and training volunteers of all ages, faiths, and backgrounds who provide friendship, advocacy, education, assistance, and emotional support. In response to the growing needs of older adults, FriendshipWorks now runs five core programs: Friendly Visiting, Medical Escorts, Friendly Helpers, PetPals, and MusicWorks. All programs are offered at no cost to those over 60 years of age (or over 55 for those with vision or hearing impairments). The nonprofit “matches” and manages over 540 volunteers (ages 18-88) who speak over 20 different languages to deliver highly personalized, one-on-one programming with elders in every neighborhood of Boston, as well as Brookline, Newton, Somerville and Cambridge.*

**About Cummings Foundation:**

*Woburn-based Cummings Foundation, Inc. was established in 1986 by Joyce and Bill Cummings of Winchester, MA and has grown to be one of the largest private foundations in New England. The Foundation directly operates its own charitable subsidiaries, including New Horizons retirement communities, in Marlborough and Woburn, and Cummings Health Sciences, LLC. Additional information is available at [www.CummingsFoundation.org](http://www.CummingsFoundation.org).*

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