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AROUND TOWN | BOYS & GIRLS CLUB, YWCA

Around Town: Boys & Girls Club, YWCA each receive flexible \$100,000 grants

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Michael Johnson, right, chief executive officer of the Boys & Girls Club of Dane County, sets up recording equipment Sunday at the club's Taft Street location for 11-year-old Kelsey Johnson and 15-year-old James Blilie.

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Just getting from Point A to Point B can be a significant but overlooked expense for nonprofits dependent on donations or grant funding.

"I need \$35,000 for gas," said Michael Johnson, chief executive officer of the Boys & Girls Club of Dane County. "There's not a lot of grants or funding sources that want to cover gas, and I pick up 500 kids from school every single week."

Overhead costs like paying staff to administer services, providing transportation to families or children and general operating costs can be tricky to consistently fund for nonprofits like Johnson's when donations or grants can be designated for specific programs or purposes.

That can unintentionally hamper growth of needed services, CUNA Mutual Foundation executive director Steven Goldberg said Sunday, and it's why the foundation has given the Boys & Girls Club and YWCA Madison each \$100,000 grants to use for overhead or infrastructure costs.

Goldberg said the foundation chose the two nonprofits, which already regularly receive funding from the foundation, because "they have a solid track record of having strong management and leadership, and a very disciplined business model, which is rare and very important in sustainability in nonprofits."

Goldberg said the grants were intended to make a statement that it's important to support infrastructure for nonprofits so they can reach their goals of serving more children and families. He said organizations like the Boys & Girls Club and YWCA, which serve a "high volume" of children and families, need to be confident their basic operations are going to be funded in order to be

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able to consistently deliver the services the community expects.

“We think this will have an impact on a large number of people in need and will put money to very smart use — not just good use, but smart, as well,” he said. “They understand the process of combining a strong service model with a strong business model, which is similar to how CUNA Mutual tries to run its business.”

Rachel Krinsky, CEO of YWCA Madison, said she sees the grant as a vote of confidence in her organization’s decision-making. Krinsky said the YWCA is working toward focusing on their areas of expertise: housing and shelter, employment training and transportation, and racial and gender equity.

“It’s just very generous, but it also allows us the flexibility and stability to pursue our mission in those three areas,” said Krinsky, who added that lately she and her staff have received more requests than ever for training that addresses racial injustice. If money to provide that training doesn’t follow, she said as an example, then she will be able to use the foundation’s grant money to make sure they can provide the training.

Johnson said the Boys & Girls Club currently serves 2,300 children, a number he wants to expand to 3,900 this year and to 10,000 within five years. Doing so will require a consistent funding source to pay for the staff that administer new programs and the programs they currently provide in Madison schools, including the high school AVID/TOPS program. Johnson said he also plans to create summer camps for Dane County children.

“You have to have the infrastructure to drive adequate services,” he said. “There’s a culture within nonprofits to do more with less and whether it’s the achievement gap, or incarceration rates, the issues are so massive but our nonprofits are tiny against them. ... This overhead piece, it’s critical.”

The \$200,000 in grants is part of CUNA Mutual Foundation’s 2014 first-quarter funding to Dane County organizations that serve children, families and homeless, according to a news release.



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