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U.S. Rep. Ellison and Top Grantmakers Share Messages of Inspiration for Supporting Social Justice Movements at the 2016 NCRP Impact Awards

Consumer Health Foundation, Evelyn & Walter Haas Jr. Fund, Patagonia and Sandler Foundation honored for work on health equity, marriage equality, environmental justice and more

08:00 ET from National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy
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MINNEAPOLIS, May 4, 2016 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- "Bold commitment to fighting inequality and injustice" was the common theme at last night's gathering of foundation and nonprofit leaders from the Twin Cities and across the country in celebration of the 2016 NCRP impact Awards.

Hosted by the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, the reception honored Consumer Health Foundation, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Patagonia and Sandler Foundation for their leadership and commitment to addressing the needs of the underrepresented and underserved, and supporting social justice efforts such as marriage equality, racial equity and environmental justice.

"To the 2016 NCRP Impact Awardees, I am grateful for the work you are doing," said Congressman Keith Ellison, who serves Minneapolis' 5th district, during his keynote. "Not since the great depression has the work that you are doing been as absolutely urgent and necessary as it is now." Ellison highlighted the fight for climate change, health care for low-income immigrant workers and racial justice as examples of the critical issues that communities are facing today.

Amid the congratulatory clapping and cheers, the awardees offered stirring messages about commitment to the issues and communities they care about, partnerships and investing in leaders who are leading the fight against injustice.

In a prerecorded message, Steve Daetz, executive vice president of the Sandler Foundation, which received the award for a grantmaking public charity, invited foundation executives to give more flexible grants for nonprofits to have lasting impact on addressing the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged communities.

"At the end of the day, it is nonprofit leaders who are the experts and agents of change, not [grantmakers]," said Daetz. "So we want to empower these leaders to use flexible funds in ways that are most important to their organizations."

The Sandler Foundation, which is based in San Francisco, California, provided critical seed funding to help launch organizations like Center for American Progress, ProPublica and Center for Responsible Lending.

Patagonia's Alex Ubbelohde stressed the importance of grassroots groups in the fight for environmental justice in the U.S. and abroad.

"For us, often, these are the communities we live and do business in, and these groups are doing the difficult work of cleaning up the environment, working within their community to find creative solutions to divisive issues, and fighting for greater access and better conditions for all people," said Ubbelohde, who manages Patagonia's retail store in St. Paul.

Patagonia, which received the award for its corporate philanthropy, is a certified B-Corporation in Ventura, California, that manufactures high-end outdoor clothing and gear. It has contributed \$76 million in cash and in-kind donations to thousands of community-based groups in support of environmental activism since 1972.

Consumer Health Foundation, based in Washington, D.C., supports efforts that advance the well-being of low-income communities and communities of color in Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia. Yanique Redwood, the foundation's president and CEO, expressed her pride in leading a foundation that is committed to "pushing the boundaries" in addressing racial equity, economic justice and other factors that affect health outcomes.

"As a new board member tells it, he joined CHF because he heard we were running into the burning building when others were running out," shared Redwood. "We plan to continue in this spirit until everyone in our region is not only safely away from danger but enjoying a healthy and dignified life." The foundation is the awardee for the small/midsized foundation category.

The recipient of this year's award for a large private foundation is Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund in San Francisco, California. Sylvia Yee, vice president of programs, reflected on what philanthropy at its best looks like.

"Philanthropy is at its best when we make it possible for everyone to dream bigger about the world that we all want to live in ... to dream about things that we can achieve only by working together and to take on tough intractable issues that others are reluctant to take on," said Yee. "Philanthropy is really about the opportunity

we have to help lift aspirations. It's about giving people long-term support to be bold. It's keeping the faith through inevitable losses and helping folks regroup and to pivot when needed. It's about leadership that can cross fault lines of race or class and communities to achieve transformative change."

The Haas, Jr. Fund was the first grantmaker to make marriage equality a priority. Along with its continued support of the marriage equality movement, the foundation is also a leading supporter of efforts on immigrant rights and education equity in San Francisco.

In his closing remarks, NCRP Executive Director Aaron Dorfman quoted the late senator Paul Wellstone to challenge the nonprofit and foundation leaders who attended the event to empower grassroots communities, especially the underserved.

"Paul said, 'What the poor, the weak and the inarticulate desperately require is power, organization and a sense of identity and purpose, not the rarified advice of political scientists,'" noted Dorfman.

The 2016 NCRP Impact Awards reception featured the work of local artist Andrea Miller. It was held in conjunction with the national conference of Grantmakers for Effective Organizations.

About the NCRP Impact Awards

The annual NCRP Impact Awards honors foundations that empower communities and produce positive lasting results in people's lives through exemplary grantmaking practices, leadership in the sector and commitment to diversity, inclusion and equity. The NCRP Impact Awards now is on its 4th year. For a complete list of awardees, visit www.ncrp.org/impact-awards.

About NCRP

As the country's only independent watchdog of foundations, NCRP uses research and advocacy to ensure that philanthropy contributes in meaningful ways to the creation of a fair, just and equitable world. Visit www.ncrp.org for more information.

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