



The members of Roots & Branches Foundation 2012-13

Get Involved

Rose Community Foundation is looking for a diverse group of Jewish people between the ages of 25 and 40 who want to be part of this collaborative grantmaking program in 2013-14. Visit RCFdenver.org/initiatives_roots.htm to learn more and to apply. The deadline to apply is Friday, June 7, 2013, however we request that you apply or indicate your intent to apply by Wednesday, May 22, so that we can schedule your interview.

Contact: Sarah Indyk at 303.398.7416 or sindyk@RCFdenver.org

What Grows Around, Comes Around

Coby Gould, Roots & Branches Foundation Member

Three years ago, my organization, The GrowHaus, was little more than a compelling food justice idea with an old greenhouse in North Denver. We applied to Roots & Branches Foundation for a grant to run our first summer program. Not only was this our first program, it was our first grant.

On our site visit from Roots & Branches members, I met Aaron Ney, a fellow advocate for food access who championed our idea to his peers. Roots & Branches saw our potential and took the leap to fund us, providing the opportunity to run our summer

program and keep us financed long enough to receive a larger grant that would ultimately kick-start our organization and my role as its executive director. We now grow thousands of vegetables each week, educate hundreds of youth each year and actively bring fresh food to those most in need in our community.

Two years later, I was informed of the opportunity to join Roots & Branches myself. I decided to participate, enthusiastic to see the other side of grantmaking and eager to give back, knowing the value of the grant we had received.

Health for the Whole Person

Elizabeth Freudenthal, Roots & Branches Foundation Member



Elizabeth Freudenthal presents her team's ideas to the rest of the group

Many in our cohort arrived at Roots & Branches Foundation already believing that health care disparity is not just a symptom, but also a cause of broader inequality. This was no coincidence. Many of our conversations about our own Jewish values pivoted on two principles:

One, that a sound body is as important as a sound mind and spirit. In Judaism, we say a prayer for those who are ill that asks for both physical and spiritual healing, recognizing the holistic and interconnected nature of life and well-being.

Two, that Judaism compels us to help the most vulnerable in our communities. If someone in our community suffers, we all suffer.

During our discussions, inequality in health care access emerged as a community problem that drew on both of these deeply Jewish values. When children lack adequate health care, they cannot achieve their full potential at school or home, making them less prepared for future challenges. When adults lack adequate health care, their jobs and are often threatened. This in turn threatens their ability to stay in their homes, feed their families and build stability. As the 12th century Jewish scholar, Maimonides, taught, the highest level of giving is to strengthen someone – to support them in maintaining their self-sufficiency.

We focused on integrated health care—delivery of multiple kinds of care in one medical home, with teams of practitioners that work together for each patient—for several reasons. First, we could not decide how to prioritize primary care, mental health or oral care. They are all important to the Jewish idea of a sound mind, body and spirit, of shalom in its sense of both “peace” and “wholeness.” Second, we know that our own sense of health is holistic and integrated. But conventional health care delivery does not treat us that way. We responded powerfully to a medical clinic model that treats whole people.

Further, we were delighted to learn about some cutting-edge clinics in Greater Denver and Boulder that were already offering integrated care. These clinics offer high-quality care and serve low- and no-income clients who are uninsured or under-insured. They achieve incredible outcomes but they all have funding gaps.

Ultimately, we made five grants under this priority, all of us pitching in an extra little of our own money to make each grant the same size, a number that is a multiple of 18, which in our tradition symbolizes chai, or “life.” We are thrilled to support this innovative, valuable model of healthcare in our community.

2013 Grants – Supporting Access to Integrated Healthcare for Low-Income and Medically Uninsured People

Clinica Family Health Services (Boulder): \$10,008 for the Thornton Medical Clinic, which provides mental health services, and primary and specialized care.

Community Health Services (Adams): \$10,008 to support the integration of a comprehensive oral health pilot program serving students at the Adams City Middle School health center.

Inner City Health Center (Denver): \$10,008 to provide mental health services, dental care and primary medical care.

Mental Health Center of Denver (Denver): \$10,008 to support integration of mental and primary medical care.

Project CLIMB (Denver): \$10,008 for the Baby & Me group visit program, offered in both Spanish and English for parents and their infants. Project CLIMB is a program of Children's Hospital Colorado.

Social Justice as a Path to Jewish Engagement

Sarah Felsen, Roots & Branches Foundation Member

This spring, as I celebrated Passover, the Haggadah’s (the book that retells the story of the Israelites’ redemption from slavery in Egypt) opening words, “Let all those who are hungry, come and eat; let all those who are needy come and celebrate,” had a new layer of meaning for me. Passover tradition compels us to open our kitchens to the needy, reflect on the blessing of freedom and work for the freedom of others. This year, as a member of Roots & Branches Foundation, I was given the opportunity to reflect on these topics well beyond the eight days of the Passover holiday.

Research shows that increasing numbers of Jewish young adults feel disconnected from organized Jewish life. At the same time, Jewish young adults exhibit a passion for volunteerism.¹ My fellow Roots & Branches members and I speculated that engaging groups of Jewish young adults in ongoing social-justice-oriented volunteer programs would help them create strong interpersonal relationships and foster ongoing involvement in Jewish communal life. Our group was especially committed to combatting hunger in the Jewish community and beyond.



Roots & Branches teammates huddle at their retreat

The grants we made to encourage young adult Jewish engagement will support three projects that marry volunteerism in the pursuit of social justice with Jewish values and community building. I am inspired by the work that our grantees are already doing to manifest social justice in our Jewish community and beyond. By next year’s Passover Seders, we will be able to reflect on a year of *tzedakah* (charity in the pursuit of Justice), *tikkun olam* (repairing the world) and *g’milut chasadim* (acts of loving kindness).

¹ *Volunteering + Values: A Repair the World Report On Young Adults*, Repair the World, Jan. 2011.

2012–13 Members

Nhi Aronheim
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 Joshua Trager
 David Weingarden

Rose Community Foundation Staff

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2013 Grants – Engaging Jewish People Ages 21 to 40 in Ongoing Volunteer Programs that Promote Social Justice

Ekar (Denver): \$9,361 to support Growing and Giving, a program engaging Jewish 20- and 30- year olds in combatting hunger and malnutrition in partnership with Moishe House Denver.

Hazon (Denver and Boulder): \$7,751 for a new fellow position to integrate food justice into Hazon’s programs and to engage Jewish 20-41 year olds in supporting this work.

Keshet (Denver): \$1,501 for social justice community organizing training to help Keshet’s young adult volunteer planning team promote inclusion in Jewish and LGBTQ communities.

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In response to one of Roots & Branches Foundation's 2012-13 grant priorities, Engaging Jewish People Ages 21 to 40 in Ongoing Volunteer Programs that Promote Social Justice, I was pleased to see an application from Ekar Farm, a Jewish urban farm that Aaron Ney now directs. I visited Ekar to get to know the program better, just as Aaron had with The GrowHaus, and was impressed with their operation - a beautifully maintained urban farm with a clear social impact in the community. My fellow Roots & Branches members agreed and we decided to fund Ekar's joint proposal with Moishe House.

In my role as an executive director, I've often heard people say small grants don't count for much. What's the impact of \$3,000 when an organization's budget is \$500,000 or more? In my case, a small grant made all the difference, allowing us to pursue our passion. And now, Roots & Branches has given me the unique opportunity to give back to another organization that I feel is doing similarly great work to change how we as a community relate to our food and each other.

Roots & Branches made 8 grants totaling

\$68,653

in 2012-13.