

THE CUMMINGS FOUNDATION GRANT WINNER CELEBRATION

BY MICHAELA O'SHAUGHNESSY



Cummings Properties CEO Dennis Clarke, Executive Director Joyce Vyriotes and Woburn Mayor Michael Concannon

ON JUNE 13, the Cummings Foundation hosted its Annual Grant Winner Celebration, a prestigious event honoring 150 local nonprofit organizations. In line with its ongoing mission to support and uplift local communities, the Foundation awarded a total of \$30 million in grants to deserving nonprofits handpicked by the Grant Selection Committee.

The grant naming portion of the ceremony began with a lyrical touch, as Executive Director Joyce Vyriotes led fellow Cummings Foundation employees and volunteers in reciting the Grant Winner Poem. Joyce Cummings followed with a Robert Lacey quote and a melodic rendition of a line from “The Greenback Dollar” by The Kingston Trio. Joyce went on to deliver high praise for the dedication and hard work demonstrated by the grant winners and the importance of “using money to help others in need.”

Governor Maura Healey addressed the 400 attendees, beginning with heartfelt gratitude to Cummings Foundation founders Bill and Joyce for their innovative, thoughtful and courageous leadership. “I’m so grateful for people like Bill and Joyce. I say ‘like’ but there’s actually no one like Bill and Joyce Cummings. The way they conceived of this, the way they set up this whole

enterprise, the way they have made it about ensuring that communities are empowered through funding.”

Calling the grant winners the “lifeblood of our communities,” Governor Healey acknowledged that while their nonprofits often operate out of the public eye, she was already familiar with many of them before the ceremony. “We rely on you to deliver in so many different ways,” she stated, recognizing their crucial contributions to the community.

“We are so fortunate to have you, so fortunate you’re there looking to deliver on behalf of people around this state and all the communities you serve. It is truly inspiring the way you go about your work,” said Governor Healey. “Every person deserves to have their worth and dignity respected. That’s what you guys empower every single day.”

As Bill and Joyce announced the nonprofits, cheers filled the air, creating a festive soundtrack to waving signs, confetti showers, rambling beach balls and air horns. As the founder of the I’m Still Here Foundation, Winchester resident John Zeisel was one of the grant recipients participating in the celebration that evening.

“Susan Law, I’m Still Here Foundation’s Executive Director, and I found it fascinating to be part of the awards evening as each of 150 organization’s name is called and



Governor Maura Healey



Joyce Cummings with I'm Still Here Foundation grant recipients Susan Law and John Zeisel



Former president of Winchester Hospital Rick Weiner with Adriana Mendes-Sheldon and Bill Cummings



300 TradeCenter

everyone realizes how many social groups of all ages and interest receive Cummings Foundation support. The I'm Still Here Foundation is honored to be among those who have this year received a multi-year grant in support of our mission and our innovative programs. Our mission: to shift the stigmatized public view of Alzheimer's and dementia to a more hopeful one—disability not disease; hope not despair; and nonpharmacologic care not drugs," said Zeisel. "The way we achieve this is by funding and spreading the word about innovative lifestyle and other non-drug programs that measurably improve the level of engagement, positive emotion and interpersonal relationships in the lives of those living with dementia—their wellbeing. Thanks so much to the Cummings Foundation for believing in our mission and supporting our efforts."

Less than a week after the conclusion of the Annual Grant Winner celebration, the Cummings Foundation

is already preparing for the next round. They are now accepting letters of inquiry for the upcoming cycle of the Cummings \$30 Million Grant Program. The tireless efforts of the Cummings Foundation are a testament to the spirit of giving, demonstrating the extraordinary impact that such support can have on building better communities.

Zeisel acknowledges these efforts as unique. "Some billionaires go to the moon, others buy islands and others still get into divisive politics. In the Renaissance in Europe, especially in Italy, the wealthy saw it as their social responsibility to payback by building and supporting community efforts—museums, libraries, churches, hospitals and social programs for those who were poor, or young, or old, or infirm. Social responsibility of this sort is almost gone from our present society. Together Bill and Joyce have created a fortune through hard work and development mostly north of Boston, with profits accruing to their Cummings Foundation."