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Communities Foundation of Texas reaches \$1B milestone in grants to charities

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By **KIM HORNER** / The Dallas Morning News
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The Communities Foundation of Texas will reach a milestone today when it surpasses \$1 billion in donations to charities over the past 56 years.

The agency, one of the largest community foundations in the nation, will celebrate with an event to distribute its most recent round of grants to local nonprofits.

Brent E. Christopher, president and CEO of the foundation, said the accomplishment would not be possible without its generous donors. He said their contributions have helped nonprofits make a difference in many people's lives over the past five decades.

"It is an extraordinary privilege for the Communities Foundation of Texas to play a role to ensure that charitable money is used productively to enrich the lives of people in North Texas," Christopher said.

The foundation, a tax-exempt charity that invests and administers donors' funds, provided \$80 million in grants to nonprofits in North Texas and other parts of the country in the fiscal year that ended in June.

Despite the downturn in the economy, the agency expects to distribute that same amount in the current fiscal year, Christopher said. The charitable grants are more needed as nonprofits face decreased donations and increased requests for help, he said.

The foundation has focused the largest percentage, 39 percent, of its grants on education and supports a variety of other programs including arts, health, youth and social services.

Its latest round of grants includes \$1.1 million to 27 area nonprofits. The gifts include \$50,000 to the North Texas Food Bank for a growing number of people in need; \$35,000 to help Grand Prairie Wellness Center serve a 40 percent increase in patients; and \$25,000 for the Undermain Theatre to restore 90 original Frank Lloyd Wright chairs.

Mi Escuelita Preschool will receive \$25,000 to fund a Together We Learn program that helps students and their parents improve their English skills.



Photos by **JIM MAHONEY/DMN**
Mi Escuelita Preschool students Isaiah Romero and Alizae Contreras pretend to soak up the sun after learning the importance of protecting against harmful rays. The Dallas nonprofit, which helps kids learn English, will receive \$25,000 from the Communities Foundation of Texas.

Gayle Nave, executive director of the Dallas nonprofit, said the program works to break the cycle of poverty by providing skills necessary to succeed in school. The program also helps parents with English and GED classes.

"We're really thrilled about this grant," Nave said. "Family literacy is one of the key indicators of how well a child is going to do in school. This allows us to carry on our Together We Learn program and reach a whole new generation of children and teach them a love of learning and a love of books."

Another \$25,000 will help The Family Place add four apartments for large families and a small schoolhouse for victims of family violence. The Dallas agency has seen growing numbers of families with several children in recent years.

Paige Flink, executive director of The Family Place, also said she's thankful for the foundation's support.

"They're helping us address the issue of homeless domestic violence victims and children who are vulnerable," she said. "It's a critical safety net they're helping us complete."