



From Left to Right:

Top Row: Mike McCloskey, Dom Samuels, Tenzin Waleag

Middle Row: Kris Barstow, Bessie Bauman (former intern), Allison Agre

Bottom Row: Pam Kellenberger, Sherman Patterson

To protect the health and well-being of the MicroGrants staff, our team is currently working remotely, but we are in full operation, aided by internal and external video-conferencing.



Dear MicroGrants Community,

Black Minnesotans, as all across the nation, suffer disproportionately from pre-existing conditions in Society, Health, and Economics. No doubt, that is why over 60 percent of the participants in our Partner Agencies, and thus our grantee cohort, are of African descent.

Social inequity is perhaps the most elusive. Pockets of racist attitudes still haunt our society. When combined with disparate power, the traumatic and lethal outcomes for men like George Floyd and the millions of black men caught in the criminal justice system makes thriving difficult.

Asthma, obesity, respiratory disease, hypertension, and heart disease, combine with the disproportional representation among bus drivers, CNAs, front line retail workers, to make the impact of COVID-19 on black communities devastatingly disproportionate and recovery more strained.

Economically, blacks suffer from centuries of deliberate and legal constraints. Systemic disincentives have created generations of alienation and entrenched poverty. Thus, the impact of economic downturns is always disproportionate and recovery more challenged.

It is in this perfect storm that Microgrants stands as a dependable buffer. Weary travelers, unable to go on, pause for a boost, a little encouragement or prevention of financial disaster. We are doing America's hard work, helping right our historic wrongs and restoring our reputation that in Minnesota, with effort and support, anyone can succeed.

Don Samuels, MicroGrants CEO

Grantees Sew Masks for Community



MicroGrants awarded a grant to former grantee Keiona Cook, fashion designer and owner of Lovely's Sewing Collective, to lead a project with seven grantees to sew 1,350 ethnic-themed masks for the African American and Indian communities.

This initiative provided income for idled entrepreneurs, while creating personal protection and enhanced awareness for communities that are highly impacted by the virus.

We worked with the Northside Achievement Zone and Little Earth to distribute the masks. Little Earth employee Margarita Ortega accepted the masks. She

said, "Thank you so very much for the masks. They were a big hit; everyone loved them and has been so grateful. I wanted you to know how much we all appreciate you!"

Regarding this endeavor, our CEO Don Samuels said, "At MicroGrants, every day we boost the careers of people of potential, but, in times of crisis, we respond even more effectively... We launch careers, we save careers, and we stay relevant to the times."

You can watch a video about this initiative, narrated by Don, at www.facebook.com/MicroGrantsMpls/videos/.

Lights On Focused on Healing

When Philando Castille was killed by police after being stopped for a broken light, we all knew that this was a low point in police-community relationships. Recently, Philando's mom mused that she had thought her son's death would have been a turning point in the treatment of black men by police. Instead, with the graphic horror of George Floyd's death, we are now at an all-time low, with inflamed wounds, universal trauma, national outrage and exacerbated black fear. We pray for the Floyd family, especially George's children, left behind to absorb this terror.

Good cops and caring citizens all want healing now. How can we reverse so egregious an offense that caps so painful a history? Clearly, policing must be

reformed from the inside and the State is stepping in to begin that work. But tomorrow, when a cop in Minnesota pulls over a driver for a burnt-out bulb, he or she will move with more confidence and hope, knowing that this interaction will be restorative. It will fix the problem. It could prevent financial disaster. And it will be a healing exchange.

Lights On is growing because the need for healing is growing. Responses are showing that we have transformed interactions over 2,100 times so far.

To conclude, our friend Shakopee Police Chief Jeff Tate said to us, *"I will work tirelessly to make things right. Thank you for all you do. We will continue to promote Lights On here in Shakopee where it has been an overwhelming success."*

50 Laptops Protect 2019 Investments



In an effort to help some of our recent grantees keep their small businesses afloat, MicroGrants has stepped in to purchase 50 laptops for grantees who lacked the technology needed to promote and support their businesses in the absence of face-to-face encounters. We are confident that this effort will help these hard-working small business owners!

MicroGrants Staff & Board Updates

MEET TENZIN



Tenzin Waleag has started as our new Communications Assistant.

Tenzin was born in India and moved to Minnesota

in 1998. He graduated from the U of M with a degree in Communications. After college, Tenzin served as an intern for the City of St. Louis Park and Anoka Ramsey Community College. Tenzin has many years of customer service experience in the hospitality and retail fields. He has also been an IT Intern, and has done photography at various events.

FAREWELL TO MIKE

MicroGrants COO Mike McCloskey has resigned from his role at MicroGrants this May after an outstanding tenure with us.

"Mike leaves MicroGrants after two incredibly productive years. Mike was the organizer behind the statewide expansion of Lights On and the streamlining of many of our internal operations. Mike wrote grants totaling over \$1.7 million and connected us with many enhancing resources. Thank you Mike," says CEO Don Samuels.

Mike will be missed, but we wish him the best in his next endeavor.

GOODBYE TO LYNNE THOMPSON



This spring, Lynne Thompson decided to leave the MicroGrants Board. Lynne, an award-winning writer and communications professional, brought much expertise MicroGrants over the years.

According to CEO Don Samuels, *"Lynne Thompson has been a funder, volunteer, and board member of MicroGrants since the beginning. For many years, Lynne has contributed time, ideas, work, and dollars to our efforts. No task has been too small or inconvenient. Lynne was always there to do what was needed. Thank you, Lynne for your dedication and hard work."*

Lights On Expanding Quickly



with 85 agencies and 115 shops, and we are not slowing down!

Furthermore, about **72% of Minnesotans are now covered by Lights On**—either through the State Patrol, their county's sheriff's office, or their city's police department.

The Joyce Foundation has recently awarded Lights On \$290,000 to help us finish expanding to the rest of Minnesota! We are very grateful for Joyce's advocacy and support over the past few years.

We are also very excited to announce that both **the Wichita,**

KA and the Saugerties, NY Police Departments are bringing Lights On to their cities this summer. They will be our first partners outside of the state, but we hope they will be the first of many!

Due to COVID-19, we have scaled back our intended 20 cities expansion and now plan to add 5 out-of-state cities this year.

In additional updates, over 2,100 vouchers have been redeemed and we have spent over \$100,000 in light-related repairs.

Grantee Shows Gratitude

Recent grantee Kira, who came to us through BiiGiiWiin, wrote a kind note expressing her gratitude for the grant we awarded to her.

Kira has started a small business focused on helping people and business declutter, organize, and be mindful. This grant will help her pay for initial start-up expenses such as software, business fees, and marketing.

Dear Micro Grants team,
It is with much gratitude & humility that I offer my sincere thanks for the Micro Grant award. The grant arrived at such a critical time for my new business as I was just getting going when the Corona Virus hit. The award offered so much hope during a challenging time. I plan to pay forward this gift one day!
much gratitude,
Kira Vandertan

One year ago, Lights On had about 30 participating law enforcement agencies and 15 auto shops. Now, we are partnered