

Contact: Kristin Kiss
312-445-5047

KKiss@McCormickFoundation.org

Robert R. McCormick Foundation Funds Community-Based Approaches to News Literacy

"Why News Matters" Grants Encourage Citizen Engagement

CHICAGO, October 4, 2012 — Recognizing the need to help educate the next generation of news consumers, the [Robert R. McCormick Foundation](#) announced plans for a three-year, \$6 million initiative, called "Why News Matters," to expand innovative approaches to improving news literacy. The initial \$1 million of these grants were announced today by Foundation CEO David Hiller at the City Club of Chicago. In addition, the Foundation is continuing to provide funding for initiatives supporting youth journalism, quality reporting and protection of press freedoms. The Foundation announced nearly \$4 million in total journalism grants.

With today's explosion of media content, news consumers of all ages are often overwhelmed with information. A June 2012 study of American youth ("[Participatory Politics: New Media and Youth Political Action](#)," by Cathy Cohen and Joseph Kahne) found that 84% of respondents say they are bombarded with information and "would benefit from learning more about how to gauge what news is trustworthy." Adults often face a similar dilemma. Why News Matters addresses the strong need for practical skills for evaluating this onslaught of information. The goal is to increase the level of informed civic engagement in the Chicago area.

"Why News Matters' grantees will bring an entrepreneurial and collaborative spirit as we expand the reach and impact of news literacy," said David Hiller, President and CEO, Robert R. McCormick Foundation. "Together, we can foster a healthy, 21st Century democracy grounded in a free press and informed, active citizenry. By harnessing our community's ideas and commitment, Chicago can become a model city for civic engagement."

In the initial round of this three-year, \$6 million Why News Matters program, the Foundation awarded more than \$1 million in grants to 11 organizations to enhance news literacy skills and programs in Chicago. The grants included \$200,000 to [City Colleges of Chicago](#) (CCC) to expand news and information literacy into various academic disciplines across all seven CCC campuses. Another \$100,000 was granted to the [Alternative Schools Network](#) for a two-year news literacy initiative across 10 charter high schools that serve students who dropped out and later returned to school. In addition, the Foundation granted \$120,000 to [DePaul University](#)'s Latino Media and Communications initiative for the expansion of hands-on news literacy programming to students at 15 Latino-dominant Chicago-area high schools.

The Foundation also continues to invest in youth media. The Foundation has awarded a two-year \$375,000 grant to [Columbia College Chicago](#) for the Columbia LINKS youth journalism program. LINKS fills the need for a citywide teen news initiative, bringing students together from a variety of high schools and neighborhoods to partner on reporting projects, for one-on-one mentoring and exposure to adult role models.

In the area of quality news content, the Foundation invests in specialized training for journalists covering communities and military/national security issues. For example, the Foundation awarded a two-year \$500,000 grant to the [Northwestern University Medill School of Journalism](#) to sustain the Medill Watchdog Initiative, which focuses on government accountability in the Chicago area.

With its focus on press freedoms, the Foundation is supporting efforts to improve government transparency and access to public information. The Foundation granted \$200,000 over two years to the [Illinois First Amendment Center](#)'s for its education and community outreach efforts in news literacy and the five freedoms of the First Amendment.

"Quality content and press freedoms are essential components in building news literacy," said Clark Bell, the Foundation's Journalism program director.

The Journalism Program has an annual grantmaking budget of \$5.5 million. The program has invested more than \$106 million in journalism since its founding in 1993.

The full list of 2012 approved grants includes:

Grants Supporting "Why News Matters" Initiative

1. [Alternative Schools Network](#), Chicago, IL
\$100,000 over two years
For a two-year news literacy initiative in a network of charter high schools
2. [City Colleges of Chicago](#), Chicago, IL
\$200,000 over two years
For support of an intergenerational news and information literacy curriculum
3. [DePaul University](#), Chicago, IL
\$120,000 over two years
For news literacy programming designed for high schools in the Latino community
4. [Erie Neighborhood House](#), Chicago, IL
\$60,000 over two years
To develop an after-school news literacy program for the Latino community
5. [The Futuro Media Group](#), New York, NY
\$60,000
For a local public forum and programs on news literacy targeting Latino audiences
6. [Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana](#), Chicago, IL
\$100,000
To support experiential, hands-on news literacy workshops for Chicago youth ages 9 -13
7. [Illinois Humanities Council](#), Chicago, IL
\$25,000
For neighborhood discussions on current affairs/ news literacy
8. [Local Initiatives Support Corporation \(LISC\) Chicago](#), Chicago, IL
\$100,000
To develop and implement news literacy training in Chicago neighborhoods
9. [Newspaper in Education Foundation \(Chicago Tribune's "Mash"\)](#), Chicago, IL
\$150,000 over two years
To include news literacy activities in youth journalism programming
10. [Northwestern University – Medill School of Journalism](#), Evanston, IL
\$30,000
For research on news habits

11. [Project Exploration](#), Chicago, IL
\$70,000 over two years
For after-school program building news literacy into science instruction

TOTAL - \$ 1,015,000

Grants Supporting Youth Journalism

12. [Columbia College](#), Chicago, IL
\$375,000 over two years
For the Columbia LINKS youth journalism program and town halls on news literacy
13. [Community Television Network \(CTVN\)](#), Chicago, Illinois
\$120,000 over two years
For enhancing youth journalism training with news literacy curriculum
14. [Free Spirit Media NFP](#), Chicago, IL
\$225,000 over two years
To expand broadcast journalism programs and youth media field building
15. [Loyola University](#), Chicago IL
\$50,000
For the Journalism/News Literacy program at Senn High School
16. [National Museum of Mexican Art \(Radio Arte\)](#), Chicago IL
\$45,000
For "Difusion Media" youth journalism programming
17. [Street-Level Youth Media](#), Chicago, IL
\$150,000 over two years
For support of a multimedia journalism program and online news literacy hub
18. [True Star Foundation Inc.](#), Chicago, IL
\$150,000 over two years
For youth journalism and news literacy training and marketing campaign
19. [We the People Media](#), Chicago, IL
\$120,000 over two years
For support of a Chicago youth journalism training program
20. [Young Chicago Authors](#), Chicago, IL
\$65,000
For support of news literacy training and the launch of a new journalism project

TOTAL - \$ 1,300,000

Grants Supporting Press Freedoms

21. [Illinois First Amendment Center \(Illinois Press Foundation\)](#), Springfield, IL
\$200,000 over two years

For a First Amendment educational program, student journalism camps and a community news literacy outreach initiative

22. [Society of Environmental Journalists](#), Jenkintown, PA
\$100,000 over two years
For support of FOIA training for environmental journalists

TOTAL - \$300,000

Grants Supporting Quality Journalism

23. [Aspen Institute](#), Aspen, CO
\$100,000
For continued support of the Aspen Security Forum
24. [Community Media Workshop](#), Chicago, IL
\$220,000 over two years
For news literacy workshops, ethnic media training and mini-grants
25. [Community Renewal Society](#), Chicago, IL
\$200,000 over two years
For general support of The Chicago Reporter's work in investigative news and community engagement
26. [Kansas University Endowment](#), Lawrence, KS
\$45,000
For military-media education training program
27. [The Maynard Institute for Journalism Education](#), Oakland, CA
\$35,000
For audience research and Richard Prince's column on diversity in journalism
28. [New America Media \(Pacific News Service\)](#), San Francisco, CA
\$150,000 over two years
For community and ethnic media work nationally
29. [Northwestern University – Medill School of Journalism](#), Evanston, IL
\$500,000 over two years
For continued support of the Medill Watchdog Initiative

TOTAL - \$1,250,000

GRAND TOTAL - \$3,865,000

About the Robert R. McCormick Foundation

The Robert R. McCormick Foundation is committed to fostering communities of educated, informed and engaged citizens. Through philanthropic programs, Cantigny Park and museums, the Foundation helps develop citizen leaders and works to make life better in our communities. The Foundation was established as a charitable trust in 1955, upon the death of Colonel Robert R. McCormick, the longtime editor and publisher of the *Chicago Tribune*. The

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