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**HIGHLAND STREET FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES \$750,000 IN
GRANTS TO HELP CULTURAL PARTNERS DURING COVID-19
CRISIS**

*Funding designated to help museums, performing arts and
cultural venues address critical need until institutions re-open*

Newton, Mass. (April 9, 2020) – The Highland Street Foundation (HSF) today announced it will award \$750,000 to 100 partner institutions – museums, theaters and cultural sites – to be used at their discretion to help recover from the Covid-19 crisis.

The grant program will take the place of the foundation's *Free Fun Fridays* initiative, which for the past 12 years has awarded more than \$7 million to provide children, families and community groups – more than 1.5 million visitors in all- with

the cost-free opportunity to visit some of Massachusetts' most beloved cultural venues.

“During these extraordinary times, we at the Highland Street Foundation want to take the steps we can to help the cultural institutions that bring so much educational enrichment, recreational opportunities, and joy to the residents of Massachusetts and visitors from around the world,” said Highland Street Foundation Executive Director Blake Jordan. “We look forward to the time when we can safely experience these institutions again and hope that many parents and children will join with us and our partner institutions. Those days cannot come soon enough.”

Because of the Covid-19 crisis, the foundation realized that it was not going to be possible to carry out its *Free Fun Fridays* program, which partners with institutions and provides funding that allows them to open their doors at no cost on consecutive Fridays throughout the summer.

“Like everyone, we have had to temporarily alter the way we do business, but rest assured that our commitment to provide increased access and opportunities to children and families remains steadfast,” Jordan said in a letter to the community.

The letter goes on to say that a modified version of the program will be rolled out in the fall, or whenever it is safe to gather. “Together, we will celebrate the resilience and strength

of our community and shine the light back on these extraordinary places of enrichment,” Jordan wrote.

Free Fun Fridays provides free admission to 100 museums, historical and recreational sites across Massachusetts. HSF created the program 12 years ago to provide children, families and community groups the opportunity to visit some of the state’s most beloved cultural venues.

HSF will immediately distribute this year’s grant allocations totaling \$750,000 to its partners to help serve their current needs.

At a time when these institutions – which depend on ticket revenues to sustain operations – are struggling to survive, the Highland Street Foundation announcement was viewed as a crucial “lifeline” by many recipients.

“I can’t fully express the impact of the Highland Street Foundation’s generous decision to provide funding to participating organizations despite the program’s cancellation - I literally wept on reading the announcement,” said Pilgrim Hall Museum Executive Director Donna D. Curtin. “You’ve extended a lifeline for organizations like ours in these extraordinary times, and we are profoundly grateful. We look forward to being able to carry the Free Fun Friday experience forward in new ways later this season, and to reconnect with families and audiences throughout the Commonwealth.”

Discovery Museum CEO Neil H. Gordon said the funding would be critical to restoring operations of the Acton-based institution, which offers a hands-on experience for families that blends science, nature, and play.

“This support will be really important as we rebuild the museum and more importantly help get kids and families on the path to returning their lives to normal,” said Gordon. “Free Fun Fridays have been an important effort to make fun, educational learning accessible to all and we promise when we re-open that will be job 1.”

To read the full letter, please visit www.highlandstreet.org

About Highland Street Foundation

Founded in 1989, the Highland Street Foundation is one of the top 10 family foundations in Massachusetts. Committed to addressing the most pressing needs and concerns for children and families in Massachusetts, Highland Street Foundation provides access and opportunities in education, housing, mentorship, health care, environment, and the arts.

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