

Outstanding Industry Ally Award 2011: Meyer Memorial Trust

Hello, I'm Jim Moorefield, Executive Director of Willamette Neighborhood Housing Services, and the Chair of the Oregon ON Board of Directors. Each year, the Oregon ON Board of Directors gives an award to a person or organization that has improved the community development industry in Oregon. As housing directors, developers and executive directors, we on the Oregon ON Board are acutely aware of how important good allies are to the work we do. If it weren't for our partners at the state and local government, for example, many of our projects would never get made. And if it weren't for our partners at corporations and foundations, many of our programs would never get funded.

It is therefore that we wish today to honor a wonderful example of what community partners foundations can really be – the Meyer Memorial Trust.

MMT, as it is affectionately known, is one of those foundations who really 'get' community development work – perhaps because we have many of the same values. Like us, they understand that community development is a long-distance run, and not a sprint. Like us, they know that sexy new projects or projects with great poster children might be an easy sell, but are often not what the community needs the most. And most importantly, like us, they are deeply interested in the stabilization and increased capacity of Oregon and southwest Washington's community safety nets.

Working with Meyer Memorial Trust, you find out that they are a funder with a rare combination of high standards, realistic expectations, and true partnership. They are smart enough to ask all the right questions, tough enough to expect excellent outcomes, and wise enough to know when to be flexible or adjust a project's parameters. Truly collaborative, they are willing to invest time to work with community development organizations to craft the best possible proposal to tackle - and positively affect - the issues at hand. It is also striking how transparent and self-reflective they are as an organization. Such leaders in their field are they, that support from Meyer is often a nonprofit's 'human credentials,' leading to other funding.

Next year, MMT will be celebrating their 30th birthday!

[look up for applause]

Since their founding, they have awarded funds to almost two-thousand-seven-hundred [2,700] separate organizations, making a difference in the lives of untold number of Oregonians.

I am honored, therefore, on behalf of the Oregon ON Board of Directors, to present Meyer Memorial Trust with the Outstanding Industry Ally Award.

Barbara, could you please come to the stage?

Barbara Gibbs is Meyer Memorial Trust's Director of Policy & Strategy, and oversees their Affordable Housing Initiative among other things. Barbara, we are so glad to have you and the Trust in our community. Thank you for all that you do.

[Applause. Hand Barbara award. Barbara takes the podium to say a few words.]