

The Cummings Foundation's Annual Grant Winner Celebration

BY MICHAELA O'SHAUGHNESSY

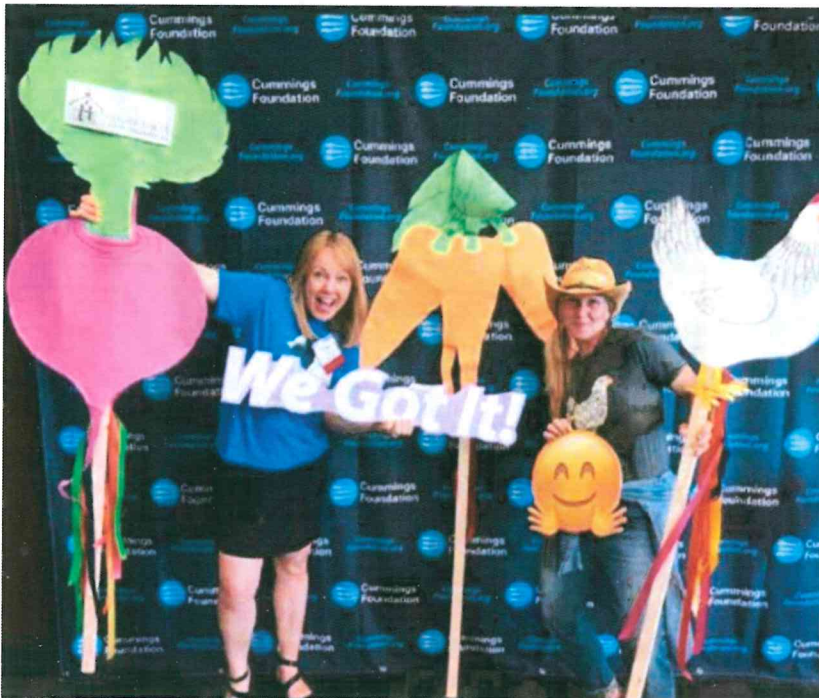
On June 15, the Cummings Foundation honored the work of 150 community nonprofits at its Annual Grant Winner Celebration. Over 350 guests composed of representatives from the 2023 grantee organization, volunteers and friends gathered at Woburn's TradeCenter 128 to celebrate the recipients of the Cummings \$30 Million Grant Program.

The evening's speaking program kicked off on a powerful note with a performance of "Que Sera Sera" by Veronica Robles, a former grant winner and founder and executive director of Veronica Robles Cultural Center.

Referencing Janet Wu's description of the event as the "Oscars of Philanthropy" during an interview with Bill Cummings on Bloomberg Radio, Executive Director of the Cummings Foundation Joyce Vyriotes remarked that while the evening was lacking a red carpet, the 150 grant winners are more impressive than the stars of the big screen as they are "stars of social justice, education, health care and human services."



Dennis Clark introducing Foundation founders Joyce and Bill Cummings



Grant winner Wright-Locke Farm

The event dates back to last July when 630 nonprofits submitted letters of inquiry, with less than half of those organizations making it to the application stage where Grant Manager Andrew Bishop said that "expertise and passion leapt off every page." The funding decisions are made by the Grant Selection Committee which is composed of 90 individuals who volunteer their time to vet applications and make the difficult decisions as to who will receive a grant. This year the number of nonprofits receiving funding expanded from 140 to 150 recipients and the total funding awarded increased from \$25 million to \$30 million.

In his introduction of Joyce and Bill Cummings, Dennis Clark, Chairman and CEO of Cummings Properties, described Joyce and Bill Cummings as "likeminded in their tireless commitment to enhancing the lives of community members."

Joyce Cummings reiterated the obvious theme of the evening but said

that it could just as well be “celebrating living better together.” After thanking the grant winners for making the world a better place, she used the words of Nelson Mandela— “people are human beings produced by the way in which they live”—to help describe them. Joyce wrapped off her speech with a quote by Dolly Parton—“if you see someone without a smile, give them one of yours”—before introducing her partner of 55 years.

Bill Cummings started off his speech by describing how the donations that originally were contained to Winchester and Woburn have expanded to include the greater Boston area. This year the nonprofits were based out of Lawrence, Lynn, Mattapan, Natick, Roxbury and many more. Winchester was represented by grantees Wright-Locke Farm and the Griffin Museum of Photography.

“We are so very grateful to receive the Cummings Foundation Grant for our Artist Residency Program. Being with all the other awardees was invigorating, all of us celebrating our future success as a result of their support,” commented Crista Dix, Executive Director of the Griffin Museum.

Praising the Cummings Foundation volunteers for their service, Bill described



Confetti for the grant winners



Wright-Locke Farm's Executive Director Erika Gorgenyi and Communications & Social Media Coordinator Tracy Kinsey



Starting with a song by Veronica Robles, founder and executive director of Veronica Robles Cultural Center

how “universally thrilled” they always are after meeting the grant winners and learning more about what they do. Leading off with a story about how he and Joyce met, he transitioned into talking about their shared family history of giving and their motto, “We give until it feels good.” Before moving on to the callout of grant winners, he compared their work to building bridges of hope, love and understanding.

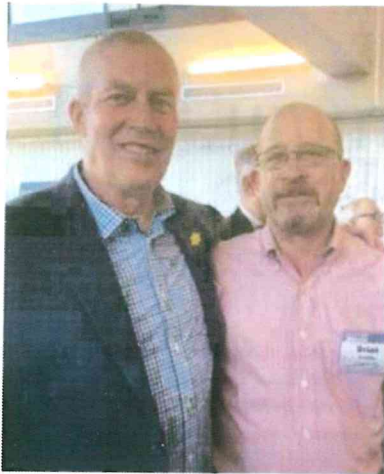
There was a common thread of humility, appreciation and compassion evident in the shared experiences of both Bill and Joyce, from their early days together to the present. Coming from humble beginnings and growing their wealth but never forgetting the meaning and impact of the work done by others, many of whom were in attendance, makes such a significant difference in the community.



Joyce and Bill Cummings



Cummings Properties CEO Dennis Clark and former Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker



Patrick Fortin, managing partner of Berkshire Hathaway, and Brian Sisitzy, L.H. Sisitzy Sales owner and Cummings Foundation volunteer

The Cummings Foundation directly operates its own charitable subsidiaries, including New Horizons retirement communities in Marlborough and Woburn. It has awarded more than \$480 million to greater Boston nonprofits to date. A substantial percentage of its funding comes from the rental income generated by its commercial real estate portfolio, which is managed on a pro bono basis by Cummings Properties. To learn more about the 1,400 nonprofits awarded funding since the Foundation began its grant-making process in 2012, visit www.CummingsFoundation.org.



Some of the evening's attendees



Joyce Vyrriotes giving the introductory speech



Crista Dix, Executive Director of the Griffin Museum