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The Raymond John Wean Foundation awards \$70,000 in grants to organizations

Projects will focus on improving lives and opportunities for residents of the Mahoning Valley

The board of directors of The Raymond John Wean Foundation has awarded about \$70,000 in grants to four different organizations focused on improving lives and opportunities for residents of the Mahoning Valley.

The funds were approved at the June 1 meeting of the directors of the Warren-based foundation and are part of The Raymond John Wean Foundation's overall mission of building capacity of organizations and individuals in the Mahoning Valley.

Valley Counseling Services Inc., JumpStart Inc., The NewsOutlet.org and the Youngstown State University Center for Urban and Regional Studies received funding for their ongoing work.

"We are excited about the work that these organizations have been doing in the Mahoning Valley and are pleased to be able to help support their efforts," said Gordon Wean, chairman of the board of directors of the foundation.

Valley Counseling Services Inc., one of the oldest mental health services providers in the state, will use its \$15,000 from The Raymond John Wean Foundation to help support the costs of a development director who will seek to secure new external funding for the non-profit mental health agency.

Consistent with The Raymond John Wean Foundation's desire to help organizations and individuals build their own capacity, the foundation also awarded \$30,000 to The NewsOutlet.org, a partnership between Youngstown State University's journalism program and professional media organizations.

TheNewsOutlet.org reports and then offers to area media important issue stories that legacy media often do not have the time nor staff to develop. Recent stories have included an investigation of living conditions in an adult group home for mentally challenged individuals. Funding from The Raymond John Wean Foundation will allow TheNewsOutlet to seek national foundation support and to secure the program's future.

The Raymond John Wean Foundation awarded \$15,395 to YSU's Center for Urban and Regional Studies for its effort to expand the Mahoning County Regional Property Information System to Warren and Trumbull County. The system collects important data about vacant properties, crime rates, property ownership, foreclosure, tax liens and basic census data.

This compiled information is important in assisting local government agencies as well as non-profit organizations in understanding needs of various neighborhoods and developing plans for how to best address the issues.

The final grant that the directors awarded was \$10,000 to Jump Start, a Northeastern Ohio organization dedicated to helping entrepreneurs develop business in the region. The Wean Foundation is funding the JumpStart Inclusion Services project, designed to help reach and educate minority and female entrepreneurs and to provide them with more advanced technical assistance to get their business ideas into actual development and implementation.

Through its capacity building initiative and focus, The Raymond John Wean Foundation is committed to helping the Mahoning Valley become a healthy place to live, work and raise families. The Raymond John Wean Foundation awards between \$3.5 million and \$4 million to organizations that are working to help the area become known for equity, innovation and collaboration. The Foundation seeks to help foster initiatives that will create a robust civic life and a dynamic and diversified economy with a good range of jobs and safe and attractive neighborhoods.