

Two of Maine's Largest Foundations Support Efforts to Empower Maine Families' Financial Stability

PORTLAND, Maine (January 22, 2014) – To help stimulate college savings in Maine and help young families develop good financial habits, the John T. Gorman Foundation and Harold Alfond Foundation are joining forces to help CASH Maine further its mission of helping Mainers attain long-term educational and financial stability goals.

CASH Maine, a collaboration of statewide coalitions made up of 50 non- and for-profit partners, will once again offer free tax preparation by IRS-certified volunteer tax preparers at sites across Maine and connect people to financial education resources, including information about funding higher education for children and their families.

Suzanne McCormick, President and CEO of the United Way of Greater Portland, noted that the generous support of the John T. Gorman Foundation and Harold Alfond Foundation, as well as the involvement of the Finance Authority of Maine, will help CASH Maine become a “best practice.” The partnership builds on the Harold Alfond College Challenge model of providing a seed grant to families with which to begin college savings. “We know that families who have good savings habits—no matter what their income level is—have children who are far more likely to graduate from high school, attend and complete college,” said McCormick. National studies show that children born to low-income but high-saving parents are 21 percent more likely in their lifetimes to move out of the bottom income quartileⁱ and into the middle class.

CASH Maine helps families start on the path to savings by ensuring they claim tax refunds and Earned Income Tax Credit dollars to which they are entitled. Last year alone, CASH Maine helped more than 4,600 Maine residents save over \$800,000 in income tax filing fees, claim \$2.4 million in Earned Income Tax Credits, and receive \$6.9 million in federal income tax refunds.

Gregory Powell, chairman of the Harold Alfond Foundation, noted that the CASH Maine program aligns with the Foundation's focus on helping Maine families and children reach their potential. “Having an educated population is more important than ever,” said Powell. “We need every child to have the best chance to succeed.” Tony Cipollone, president and CEO of the John T. Gorman Foundation, said that the opportunity to increase their positive impact on Maine's disadvantaged families was what brought the two foundations together. “What is especially exciting for us is that the work we're about to support with Alfond exemplifies a potentially powerful ‘two-generation’ strategy to advance resources and opportunities that can benefit both parents and their children simultaneously,” Cipollone said.

“Thanks to the generous support of these visionary foundations, we will increase the number of families that benefit from CASH Maine's free tax preparation services, claim the Earned Income Tax Credit, and get connected to resources that help them save toward higher education,” said McCormick, who noted that the combined investment by the two foundations was significant.

Families with low to moderate income are eligible to receive free tax preparation services from CASH Maine. To find the nearest CASH Maine location and schedule an appointment, call 2-1-1 or visit www.cashmaine.org.

ABOUT CASH Maine

CASH Maine is a collaboration of ten statewide coalitions, comprised of 50 non- and for-profit partners, working together to help low- and moderate-income Mainers make the most of their money. CASH Maine offers free tax preparation by IRS-certified volunteer tax preparers, and connects residents to financial education resources, including information about funding higher education for children and their families. Last year, CASH Maine helped more than 4,610 Maine residents save \$806,750 in filing fees and claim \$2.4 million in Earned Income Tax Credits while getting \$6.9 million back in federal income tax refunds. For more information, visit www.cashmaine.org or call 2-1-1.

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ⁱ Reid Cramer, Rourke O'Brien, Daniel Cooper and Maria Luengo-Prado, “A Penny Saved is Mobility Earned: Advancing Economic Mobility through Savings,” Washington, DC: The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2009, http://www.pewtrusts.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/Reports/Economic_Mobility/EMP_Savings_Report.pdf.