



**SIERRA HEALTH FOUNDATION**  
*An Endowment for Northern California*

## **Sierra Health Foundation Grantmaking History**

### **Sierra Health Foundation's First Grants**

In 1985, Sierra Health Foundation awarded its first 44 grants—responding to the significant need for health care access, education and outreach in Northern California's underserved communities. While grantees included local chapters of the American Cancer Society and the American Lung Association, most funding went to smaller, community-based organizations, and to regional college and university programs. Seed money helped support family social services, senior peer counseling, suicide prevention, social and health care services for seniors, health care education in elementary schools, construction of a women's and children's shelter, a health publications library, medical equipment purchases, and services designed to benefit patients challenged by AIDS, diabetes, heart disease, Alzheimer's, alcoholism and other diseases.

### **Northern California AIDS Initiative**

Sierra Health Foundation developed the Northern California AIDS Initiative to address impending needs created by the AIDS epidemic. From 1988 to 1991, Sierra Health awarded 103 grants to 42 organizations in 10 counties, and to other programs with a broader geographic focus. The initiative provided social case management and end-of-life care, as well as prevention of disease transmission. Seed money and support were granted to create the Center for AIDS Research, Education and Services (CARES)—the second-largest provider of services to people with HIV/AIDS in Northern California. CARES continues today as the region's major provider of AIDS care and performs many clinical trials. Sierra Health also awarded grants to new and established organizations that were able to attract additional funding to increase services.

### **Prenatal Care Access Initiative**

Sierra Health Foundation created the Prenatal Care Access Initiative in 1989 to increase access to and utilization of prenatal health care and to improve childbirth outcomes for low-income women in Northern California. The initiative recruited obstetricians to establish medical practices in rural California communities, and provided assistance and incentives for pregnant women to make prenatal care visits. From 1989 to 1992, the program awarded 64 grants to 38 organizations in nine counties. During the three-year funding period, the program produced these outcomes: an increase in the number of prenatal clinics from 43 to 59 (eight were supported by Sierra Health); nine maternity nurse practitioners trained through initiative grants; 9,430 women served and 1,285 babies born; 85 percent of PCAI women received adequate prenatal care vs. 69 percent nationally.

### **Community Partnerships for Healthy Children**

Sierra Health Foundation believes parents and families, supported by community resources, are responsible for the healthy development and care of their children. From 1993 to 2003, Community Partnerships for Healthy Children built upon extensive grassroots participation among parents and organizations. Each community identified its own needs related to young children and addressed them by maximizing existing community resources and developing new ones. Areas of collaboration included health access, parenting issues, school readiness and achievement, after-school recreation and early childhood development. Many of these collaboratives continue today, working to support the healthy development of young children.

### **Conference and Convening Program**

When Sierra Health Foundation built its offices along the Sacramento River in 1994, the first floor was designed with the community in mind. Sierra Health created the Conference and Convening Program and began offering meeting space at no charge to qualified health-related nonprofits and public agencies. The conference center is ideal for retreats, conferences, seminars and workshops. It often serves as a neutral meeting site for cultivating nonpartisan debate, policy-making and collaboration. Each year more than 14,000 people, from grassroots organizers to policy-makers, use Sierra Health's facility. Preference is given to organizations working to strengthen and create youth development programs, develop sound health policy, and improve health care for underserved populations.

### **Managed Care**

Sierra Health Foundation created the Managed Care program in 1995 in response to major changes in the health care system that impacted both consumers and providers. From 1995 to 1999, Sierra Health awarded 18 grants to 12 organizations. A grant to the Health Rights Hotline helped create a consumer education and ombudsman program serving El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento and Yolo counties. The Hotline continues operation and is a model for ombudsman programs statewide. Sierra Health produced five widely distributed publications on regional managed care, system change and quality issues. Grants to UC Davis established a scholarship program to support medical students in the MD/MBA program, and funded a curriculum to prepare physicians to work with underserved populations in the managed care environment.

### **Disaster Funding**

Sierra Health Foundation responded to emergency needs arising from the 1997 flooding in Northern California by partnering with The California Endowment and the California HealthCare Foundation to award 11 grants to 11 organizations in nine counties. Sierra Health's Community Partnerships for Healthy Children collaboratives played an important role by identifying needs, mobilizing emergency relief agencies and leading evacuation efforts. Sixty-five percent of funding supported interfaith organizations by contributing half of their disaster support. These organizations supplied 800,000 meals to flood survivors and emergency workers, sheltered 57,000 people, provided approximately 7,800 people with mental health counseling and repaired or rebuilt 396 homes. The \$1 million in grants generated about \$3 million in in-kind donations and volunteer labor.

### ***brightSMILES* Dental Health Partnership**

The *brightSMILES* Dental Health Partnership was created in 1999 by Sierra Health Foundation to address inadequate preventive dental care and untreated dental disease in Northern California. Preschool children in non-fluoridated rural areas were particularly at risk for preventable tooth decay. Initial *brightSMILES* grants supported oral health screenings, application of sealants and treatment of disease. The program's current focus is on school-based oral disease prevention and education.

### **Health Leadership Program**

Created by Sierra Health Foundation in 2001, the Health Leadership Program cultivates the leadership skills of current and future leaders of nonprofit organizations and public agencies committed to improving the health of Northern Californians. The program supports diverse groups—from urban organizations serving a large client base to small, rural agencies serving a wide geographic area. The curriculum is delivered by nationally respected leadership trainers and is led by University of Southern California faculty. Class members participate in intense interactive sessions, team action-learning projects and peer-to-peer exchange. The program kicks off with a four-day retreat. Sessions take place at Sierra Health along the Sacramento River and at its Grizzly Creek Ranch Camp in Plumas County. The program is offered at no cost to qualifying participants.

### **Capacity Building**

Sierra Health Foundation believes it isn't enough to simply solve one problem or fund one program; instead, an infrastructure of capability needs to be developed and nurtured over time. Long-term, sustainable results come from capacity building—strengthening an individual, organization or community from the roots up. In 2001, Sierra Health expanded its grantmaking to the area of organizational capacity building. Already investing in individuals and communities through other programs, from 2001 to 2007, Organizational Assessment grants supported the other critical player in communities: nonprofit organizations.

### **Grizzly Creek Ranch Camp and Conference Center**

Pine forests, clear streams and serene meadows shelter Grizzly Creek Ranch Camp from the clamor of the outside world. Located in Plumas County, the 1,500-acre camp accommodates youth who live with health-related challenges or disabilities, as well as those considered at-risk due to social and economic need. Sierra Health Foundation began camp construction in March 2001 and welcomed its first campers in summer 2003. The camp works in partnership with nonprofit organizations serving youth with special needs. The camp's mission is to improve the health, independence and life skills of children through an organized camping experience. Outdoor activities nurture growth and inspire campers to develop to their fullest potential. In the off-season, the camp is available as a retreat and conference center.

### **REACH: Connecting Communities and Youth for a Healthy Future**

This program builds on the experience and lessons from Sierra Health Foundation's earlier Community Partnerships for Healthy Children by using a strength-based approach to helping communities create positive opportunities for their youth. Funding includes grants to increase youth participation in quality programs, grants to support youth-led projects that contribute to community while developing youth leadership skills, and grants and technical assistance to broad community coalitions to improve conditions for youth. In 2005, Sierra Health's board of directors made an initial five-year

commitment to the REACH program, and the first REACH grants were awarded in early 2006.

### **Responsive Grants Program**

Sierra Health Foundation launched the Responsive Grants Program in June 2008 with a commitment of \$2.2 million in funding over two years for nonprofit organizations and public agencies in its 26-county funding region. The goal of the Responsive Grants Program is to promote health and well-being in Northern California communities. Sierra Health asks nonprofit organizations and agencies to explain what their community needs and concerns are, and how a grant from Sierra Health can help address them. In 2008, Responsive grants up to \$40,000 supported projects in three broad funding areas: Expanding Health Insurance, Improving Health Care Access and Promoting Health. Of the \$1.2 million available in 2008, 30 percent was available exclusively to projects serving rural areas in Sierra Health's funding region. The remaining 70 percent was available to projects serving urban areas and/or rural areas. In 2009, Sierra Health committed \$1 million for emergency safety-net services, with grants up to \$25,000 supporting basic needs, such as food, clothing and shelter.

### **Nonprofit Innovation Center**

In 2009, Sierra Health Foundation opened this multitenant center for nonprofits that are working to improve health and well-being in Northern California. The vision for the center is to assist area nonprofits in becoming more effective so they can better support efforts to improve the lives of residents in our communities. This collaborative model will inspire nonprofits to work at peak performance by leveraging each other's wisdom and expertise to powerfully impact the region. The center's open-space design is meant to promote cross-agency learning, engagement and resource sharing among tenants. This model for shared nonprofit workspace is becoming increasingly popular across the country. In addition to benefits such as below-market lease rates and cost savings from shared resources, Nonprofit Innovation Center tenants enjoy working in a convenient, beautiful location, as well as opportunities for collaboration.

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