

\$100,000 Martha Washington Grant targets critical gap to prevent recurring domestic violence

In the spring of 2009, the Portland Women's Foundation decided to make a greater impact in the community in a targeted way. Out of a retreat was born the idea of giving a three-year \$100,000 dollar grant for a project that would provide verifiable success. We asked applying agencies to define a critical need and propose a solution.

PWF invited 14 organizations with which we have long standing relationships to submit proposals. We received 13 responses and selected three finalists.

We are very proud to award the first Martha Washington Special Impact Grant (MWG) to the *Solid Ground Project* of the Volunteers of America (VOA) - Home Free program.

Solid Ground addresses a critical gap that prevents women from successfully escaping domestic violence by providing ongoing, targeted mental health counseling and support as women move beyond violence into independent living.

VOA made a compelling argument that this support will provide a potentially longer and more significant impact in helping women build a strong foundation for themselves and their children.

Women often secure their freedom from abuse, only to be turned out into the community before they develop the coping skills to build a new life. Their trauma and scars are often so deep that just gaining food, shelter and a job are not enough.

Specialty care by professionals trained in domestic violence issues has not been available on a sustainable basis in the Portland area.

The MWG funds will provide a specially trained therapist to work with 25-35 women.

The Martha Washington Grant is named in honor of the first Martha Washington Hotel, built in 1917 by our organization, then known as Portland Women's Union, to house young women newly arrived in our growing town. Today, the hotel remains in the city's fabric and after renovation, reopens in June to house 108 homeless and chronically mentally ill people in downtown Portland.