

COMMUNITY  
 ENDOWMENT

# Fund seeks \$1M

Residents hope  
 donations will  
 help nonprofits

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Looking for new ways to create a "better Lexington," several residents are creating an endowment to help support the areas of town in need of extra financial support.

Stephanie Wolk Lawrence founded the Community Endowment of Lexington, which will focus attention and money towards nonprofit organizations in town. Wolk Lawrence said she is looking to raise at least \$1 million to be put toward, but not limited to, organizations that specialize in health and human services, the arts, environmental protection and community building.

"Our area of focus can change as the needs of the community change around us," said Wolk Lawrence.

Wolk Lawrence started talking about building a better Lexington with friends and colleagues in 2012. She is now one of the original members of the board of directors for the start-up funding source.

Through the parent organization Foundation For MetroWest, the Community Endowment of Lexington was born this spring. Wolk Lawrence and her friends modeled their endowment structure off the local charity Lexington Education Fund (LEF), which raises money to provide

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 equipment and training to Lexington Public Schools.

The endowment will work on a grant system, where organizations pitch plans in order to receive grants. While the criteria for grants has not been completely fleshed out, Wolk Lawrence said she hopes to send out the first request for grant proposals in late winter. She anticipates members of the endowment's board will select the grant winners in the spring.

**Community focused**

By consulting the Foundation for MetroWest, and a similar endowment in Wellesley, members of the Community Endowment of Lexington were able to learn what has and hasn't worked for similar projects. The Lexington founders held focus

groups to determine the need in town.

"A lot of community leaders and representatives from different nonprofits came to brainstorm with us about the town's most pressing needs," said Wolk Lawrence, whose background is in social service administration. "A lot of them said they are hurting for funding because of public cuts and the economy."

The funding to establish the endowment will come through private individuals and companies' donations.

Co-chairman of the board Leslie Zales said she would like to see a more collaborative Lexington.

"We need to be more collaborative in the way cultures are coming together," said Zales. "One of our strengths is diversity, but it would be better if we were talking to our neighbors."

Her thoughts on ways to improve the town were not solely focused on the people in town. Zales indicated the beautification of town through landscaping would be a way to better the town.

"We're excited to make a positive change," said Zales, who is the chairman of the Parent Teachers Association Presidents Council for Lexington Public Schools. "Members of the board feel proud to be residents here, but there are quirky things, like in any town, that can be improved. We're

all coming together with different ideas."

