

West Austin News

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Impact Austin Grants \$510,000 to Austin Nonprofits



Barry Aidman of Breakthrough Austin receives a grant check from Impact Austin with Jennifer Rivera, Jennifer Hartner, Gillian Coates, and Donna Howard at the June 12 check presentation ceremony at City Hall.

By Rose L. Thayer
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Impact Austin, a women's philanthropy organization, gave five grants worth \$102,000 each to five nonprofits in Austin. This year marked a milestone for Impact Austin. Founder Rebecca Powers' goal when she founded the organization five years ago was to be able to give at least \$100,000 in five different service areas.

The recipients and their service categories included Breakthrough for education, Southwest Keys for culture, Goodwill for family work, Ecology Austin for work for the environment and SafePlace for their work in health and wellness.

"This year was very satisfying because it was a dream. To see this vision realized was pretty powerful."

Powers said of finally being able to fund each of these categories. "Now that we've reached our goal, we really hope to deepen our roots in the community."

Impact Austin is made up of more than 500 women, each donating \$1,000 toward the grant fund. They select which nonprofit to donate to as a group. They chose this year's five winners from 129 applicants. To narrow down the selection, Powers said they look at the number of lives touched by the nonprofits' work as well as the impact it has on those lives.

But Powers emphasized that even if a nonprofit doesn't receive the grant, they've still put their cause before 500 philanthropists. "I've heard members say,

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“Well they didn’t get the grant, but I’m still going to give them a donation.”

Breakthrough Austin did receive a grant and executive director Barry Aidman couldn’t have been more thrilled. “I’m just so excited to have this vote of confidence from such a gen-

erous group of leaders in the community. I feel very fortunate,” said the former principal of Casis Elementary.

Breakthrough plans to use the funds for their middle school program. Selected seventh and eighth graders spend six weeks in the summer for two summers strengthening their academic skills. Classes are taught by high school and college-level interns from across the country on the Uni-

versity of Texas campus.

“We are trying to give these kids the idea that it’s cool to be smart,” said Aidman. Each year over the last six years Breakthrough adds 45 students entering seventh grade and follows and supports them through high school graduation. This year marked the first graduating class from the program. They had an 87 percent graduation rate, and most graduates have plans to attend college.

Aidman added that those numbers show that something in the program is working and that additional funds will help expand the program to more middle schools.

Impact Austin plans to release information about a nonprofit workshop in November via their Web site, www.impact-austin.org. More information on the organization and how to join is also available.