‘Shaking things up in Greater New Bedford’

Of five finalists in the running for United Way’s Innovation Fund, three organizations received large checks for grants to be used over a three-year period. Below, from left, the Greater New Bedford Community Health Center, award $100,000; the Women’s Center, which was awarded $60,000 and the Greater New Bedford Youth Alliance, got $100,000. The program allowed applicants to develop new programs focusing on health, education, or financial stability for up to 300,000 for up to three years. United Way of Greater New Bedford received an additional $60,000.

Gov. Baker committed to rail project

In an annual State of the State address, Gov. Charlie Baker said he was committed to making commuter rail service from Fall River and New Bedford a reality. Baker also addressed other issues during his speech, including opioids, housing, health care and environmental issues. See FULL STORY, A2

Opioids

Baker pushed lawmakers to approve a bill that would let police officers and medical professionals bring high-risk individuals to substance abuse treatment centers, even against their will, for up to 72 hours.

Housing

Baker discussed his plan to create 12,500 new housing units in Massachusetts over 24 years, saying 3,000 young people in providence.

Three organizations named Innovation Fund winners

By Aimee Chivaroli

NEW BEDFORD — In the New Bedford Whaling Museum Harbor View Gallery Tuesday evening, community members and those in the nonprofit sector awaited the announcement of United Way’s Innovation Fund winners.

Of five finalists, three organizations received large checks for grants to be used over a three-year period: The Greater New Bedford Community Health Center, awarded $35,073, the Women’s Center, which was awarded $90,000, and the Greater New Bedford Youth Alliance got $100,000. All finalists were awarded a plaque, which include Global Learning Charter Public School and People Acting in Community Endeavors (PACE).

The Innovation Fund which launched in September allowed applicants to submit a proposed project dealing with health, education or financial stability for up to $100,000 for up to three years. United Way of Greater New Bedford received 25 applications and with the help of eight judges including a few board members, five finalists were named.

“The really one of the most challenging things we’ve ever done,” said President and CEO Michelle Mantman after the winners were announced. The show-case allowed the projects to get exposure and allowed organizations to network and possibly get their projects funded another way.

“United Way’s Innovation Fund is all about shaking things up in Greater New Bedford,” and that’s just what the organizations set out to do with the projects.

The Greater New Bedford Community Health Center was the first winner announced.

It aims to fully integrate opioid treatment into its primary care service model by proposing Medication Assisted Treatment which combines medication and counseling to treat opioid use disorder. The center is set to prescribe and monitor buprenorphine (the generic version of suboxone).

“It will help our patients who have an opioid use disorder to get all their care in one place,” said CEO Cheryl Bartlett.

Thanks to United Way and a federal grant, the center plans to hire a full time social worker and a full time recovery coach. In addition, two nurse practitioners and three doctors, including one OB/GYN will finish training and be certified to prescribe buprenorphine.

“This is something we’ve wanted to do for a long time,” said Pamela MacLeod-Lima, executive director of The Women’s Center, of its Homeport – Alternative to Shelter program.

“It’s an opportunity to take a new look at how we can keep people safe and at the same time connect it to the community,” she said.

The program will allow women and children to “safety and shelter in place.” A victim safety plan and perpetrator danger assessment will help determine which families will be safe to include in the Homeport model, and otherwise be safe and secure in their own homes with current security technology.

The Greater New Bedford Youth Alliance, a collaboration of 21 youth-serving organizations, started about two and a half years ago with guidance from the Community Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts and funding from one of their foundations, according to Facilitator Warren Berube.

“This tool ... will allow us to have a way of letting people know what we’re doing and what our impact is,” Berube said.

The goal is to replicate and shape a system like “Cityspan – Youth Services” used by Providence After School Alliance (PASA) which is able to track enrollment, participation and retention across multiple organizations for more than 3,000 youth in providence.

This allows PASA to have an overview of all programs and quickly produce quantitative results to funders and other stakeholders.

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