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3 Oregon organizations receive a 2-year, grant from the Collins Foundation

EUGENE, ORE. – Three Oregon organizations – Beyond Toxics, NAACP Eugene-Springfield and NOWIA Unete Farm Worker Advocacy Center received a 2-year, \$90,000 grant from the Collins Foundation, an Oregon-based philanthropic organization. The grant supports the project Intersectional Collaboration for Environmental Justice, which will serve Latino, African-American and other vulnerable communities as well as low-income and rural residents in Lane, Jackson and Josephine counties. The purpose of the grant is to build more public understanding and support for racial and environmental justice.

The US EPA defines environmental justice as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to environmental laws and policies. Although environmental protections have generally improved since the 1970s, decades of research across the nation show that African-Americans, Latino and low-income communities very often suffer the greatest environmental health risks and devaluation of property values from pollution and toxic chemicals in the air they breathe and water they drink. The grant allows these three different organizations to deepen their cooperative relationships to address the inequities of environmental policies. They will be scheduling educational programs in all three counties, culminating with an environmental justice summit in Eugene in 2019.

The Eugene-based Beyond Toxics will serve as the fiscal sponsor for the grant funding. “Beyond Toxics is excited to receive this new support from the Collins Foundation as we advance the cause of environmental justice in Oregon,” said Lisa Arkin, Executive Director of Beyond Toxics. “As Oregon’s oldest and highly successful statewide environmental justice non-profit, this grant helps expand our long-standing partnerships with Unete and the NAACP, particularly in the areas of farm worker rights and climate pollution.”

“True movement building calls for diverse groups to work together despite differing perspectives,” said Eric Richardson, President of the Eugene-Springfield NAACP. “This innovative project seeks to open up new lines of communication and collaboration between the Latino and Black communities understanding our shared struggle for a safe, welcoming accountable society.”

The grant funds are being used primarily to hire three new environmental justice organizers to develop educational programs and bring communities together over shared needs and perspectives. Their work will require substantial travel and coordination. The NAACP hired Luis Alvarez, a recent UO graduate, to lead their new climate justice programming. Beyond Toxics hired Bianca Ballara, a land stewardship educator from Josephine County. Unete Farm Worker Advocacy Center hired Nicholas Morales, who is also pursuing a second college degree in computer sciences. All three organizers speak fluent Spanish and have experience organizing in disadvantaged communities.

For more information, or to inquire about bringing the team of environmental justice organizers to your community or organization, please contact **Lisa Arkin**, Executive Director at Beyond Toxics at Beyond Toxics (**541-465-8860**).

Beyond Toxics promotes environmental justice engagement and community-based environmental grassroots organizing to ensure environmental protection and health for all communities.