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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Collaboration Grants Awarded for Second Year;

Five Local Projects Benefit Neighborhoods

An energy-efficiency competition, Victorian Village tourism training for public housing residents and a revitalization of old town Millington are among the projects that will bring University of Memphis students, faculty, neighborhood leaders and nonprofits to work together to strengthen communities in Shelby County.

The Strengthening Communities Initiative, a collaboration among the Community Foundation of Greater Memphis, United Way of the Mid-South and the University of Memphis now in its second year, aims to attack and fix persistent problems such as safety, housing, health, transportation, education and economic development in many Memphis neighborhoods.

“This initiative brings together University of Memphis faculty and students and community organizations for neighborhood projects and capacity building for neighborhood organizations,” said Stan Hyland, head of the School of Urban Affairs & Public Policy at the University of Memphis.

Hyland added that part of the mission of the University of Memphis is serve the urban, regional, state and national communities through engaged scholarship opportunities. Engaged scholarship involves faculty members and students in academic projects with community groups, connects university outreach with community organizational goals, and furthers productive relationships between the university and the community.

The collaboration is entering its second year on the heels of successes from last year’s projects. To date, the program has awarded more than \$146,000 in grants for seven neighborhood projects.

Two \$40,000 grants, one each from the Community Foundation's Community Partnership Fund and the United Way of the Mid-South, along with \$25,000 from the University will support this year's projects:

- The Smallest User: a competition between the Cooper-Young and Evergreen neighborhoods, working with the University's journalism department, to see which one can become the most energy-efficient.
- Heritage Tourism Resident Training Program: Victorian Village Inc., a local community development corporation, will work with the Department of Architecture to develop a curriculum about the history of the downtown area that features a number of historic homes. Once complete, the curriculum will be used to train neighborhood public housing residents to serve as ambassadors and tour guides for the neighborhood.
- Cultural Heritage of the African American Community exhibit at Chucalissa: High school students from the Westwood community will work with the Department of Anthropology to study and build an exhibit highlighting the cultural heritage of the area.
- Old Town Millington Vision Planning: Millington Community Court Services will work with the Department of Architecture to create a community-driven plan to revitalize the oldest neighborhood in county.
- Engaging the Latino Population: Binghampton Community Development Corporation will use innovative strategies to involve the Latino population in community development activities.

Robert M. Fockler, president of the Community Foundation of Greater Memphis, said the program's goals reach beyond the projects that are being funded. "We hope to do several things with the Strengthening Communities program" he said. "While the

majority of the benefit on the surface is to build neighborhoods for stronger programs and larger funding opportunities, we also expect to see the initiative become a national model for collaborative grant making.”

The Urban Serving University Consortium, of which the U of M is a member, is leading a legislative initiative that focuses on strengthening communities, health disparities, and urban education. The University of Memphis is the only university in Tennessee to be recognized as a member.

The Community Foundation of Greater Memphis is the largest grant-making organization in the Mid-South. Founded in 1969, the Foundation works with individuals, families and organizations to help them make the best use of charitable resources. The Foundation manages 1,000 charitable funds and awarded \$36.7 million in grants last year.

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