

Media Contact:
Jeanne Carpenter
jcarpenter@perception-ink.com
612.803.1282

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

***Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundations Award Two Grants
Advancing Innovative Programs Supporting Individuals
Impacted by the Criminal Justice System***

Grantees are the Reentry Clinic at the Mitchell Hamline Law School and SEEN, a Minnesota prison-based project of We Are All Criminals

St. Paul, Minn. – Aug. 20, 2019 – [The Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundations](#) (the Foundations) today announced the awarding of two grants to community organizations whose work focuses on addressing disparities in the criminal justice system. Both programs are aligned with two of the Foundations’ key strategies: advocating for equity and investing in community-led solutions.

A grant of \$145,000 will fund an expansion of the Mitchell Hamline School of Law Re-entry Clinic aimed at closing a gap in services provided to those returning from prison by providing--in addition to direct legal representation--community education and a resource hub for re-entry services in the community. The clinic engages law students, under the supervision of experienced attorneys, to provide legal representation with clinic clients.

“More than 8,000 people are released from prison in Minnesota every year and thousands more are released from local facilities,” said Peter Knapp, Mitchell Hamline’s interim president and dean. “But being out of lock up doesn’t mean you’re not locked out. Formerly incarcerated individuals face great barriers, many of them legal. This grant will enable us to expand the Clinic’s representation and support as our clients navigate legal and other challenges that people face as they return home.”

A second grant for nearly \$40,000 will fund SEEN, a project led by We Are All Criminals (WAAC) in partnership with the Minnesota Prison Writers Workshop (MPWW), men and women currently incarcerated in Minnesota’s state prisons (writers), and the Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC). SEEN will collect portraits, audio, written works and video of people in prison shared via social media, in addition to printed exhibits. SEEN was designed to share the voice and humanity of individuals in Minnesota prisons. The project encourages viewers to ‘see’ those incarcerated as human beings who are more than the mistakes they have made.

“We are deeply grateful to the Foundations for this grant that will expand both the reach and offerings of the SEEN project,” said Emily Baxter, executive director of We Are All Criminals. “In partnership with the Minnesota Department of Corrections, our ongoing vision will include portraits and the written and spoken word of more currently incarcerated people, correctional and probation officers, and the family members and loved ones of people currently incarcerated.”

Over the past five years, the Foundations have awarded grants to a number of organizations dedicated to criminal justice reform. Among those that have received Foundations’ support are COMPAS, Inc., Dispute

Resolution Center, Mentoring Young Adults, Oyate Hotanin, St. Paul Youth Service, Ujamaa Place and Volunteer Lawyers Network.

“We need avenues by which to welcome back people who are re-entering society and help them not only survive but return with dignity. This means access to jobs, housing and meaningful opportunities to move forward with their lives,” said Eric J. Jolly, Ph.D., president and CEO of the Foundations. “The Mitchell Hamline Law School Re-entry Clinic and the SEEN project are both working to make re-entry less difficult and more equitable, and to humanize justice-impacted people, by tackling barriers and sharing narratives about what it means to be incarcerated. We are honored to support the innovative work of both organizations.”

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About the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundations

Founded in Saint Paul in 1940, the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundations is Minnesota’s largest community foundation and a partner with thousands of donors, professional advisors, nonprofits and community organizations. The Foundations support more than 2,000 charitable organizations and donor funds and manage nearly \$1.5 billion in assets, including F. R. Bigelow Foundation and Mardag Foundation. Visit: spmcf.org.

About Mitchell Hamline School of Law Re-entry Clinic

The Re-entry Clinic works to empower and assist individuals experiencing the collateral consequences of the criminal justice system to achieve better lives. Since its inception, the Re-entry Clinic has represented incarcerated individuals in civil matters and trained numerous student attorneys to approach their work in the criminal justice system with empathy and respect. The Re-entry Clinic helps those individuals burdened with a criminal record fully re-enter society by providing holistic representation to ensure recently released persons have the best opportunity to live a safe and fulfilling life. This work is on the cutting edge of criminal justice and provides insight into the next wave of restorative justice reform. Mitchell Hamline School of Law students provide direct representation to individuals in a whole host of legal matters, including family law, expungement and civil rights lawsuits. Students interview clients, draft pleadings and appear in court on behalf of the client. Visit: <https://mitchellhamline.edu/clinics/re-entry-clinic/>

About SEEN

We Are All Criminals is a non-profit organization dedicated to challenging society’s perceptions of what it means to be “criminal.” Through shared stories of those who committed or were accused of committing crimes, those who got away with them, and those who have been directly affected by the criminal justice system, we seek to erase the barriers that separate us. (will add the Visit and link you provided. Visit: <https://www.weareallcriminals.org/seen/>