

Beehive keeps focus on economic security

Ret Boney | August 7, 2009



Billie Karel

With the recession continuing to take a heavy toll on Triangle residents, a fledgling giving circle will focus its second-ever grant cycle on promoting financial security.

The Beehive Collective, started in May 2008 by a group of local women, is seeking proposals for two grants totaling about \$20,000.

"It is still terribly relevant to be talking about financial security and literacy when the economy is still in recession," says Billie Karel, a founding board member of the circle and chair of the grants committee.

During its first grant cycle in 2008, the collective awarded \$9,314 to Passage Home, a Raleigh-based community development corporation, for its Just Greening Communities program, which helps unemployed people to learn construction skills by building energy-efficient affordable housing.

Beehive received so many grant proposals for that one award last year that the group decided to stick with the focus area for 2009.

The circle has about 45 members, most of them women ranging in age from their early twenties to mid-forties, Karel says

Each member agrees to contribute 0.5 percent of their annual income to a fund that is distributed in grants once a year.

Karel expects those contributions, plus proceeds from various fundraising parties, to total at least \$20,000 this year, and the group is accepting grant applications through September 1. Information about eligibility and guidelines is available [online](#).

Once the grants committee receives the applications, it reads and scores each one and schedules site visits to a select number.

After another cut, the committee presents a set of finalists to the full membership for a vote.

With a membership made up of young adults from all walks of life, including bartenders, artists, lawyers and nonprofit staffers, a major objective for the group is to have fun.

"All the fun stuff we do is how we recruit people," says Karel, who by day is a program coordinator for Toxic Free North Carolina, a nonprofit that fights pesticide pollution. "We throw really great fundraising parties. And while you're there partying, you hear all about the collective and what we do and get a pitch to join."

Its next event is "Beers with the Bees," to be held Aug. 12 at Foundation, a downtown-Raleigh bar, is a chance for Beehive members to catch up and for others to learn more about its work.

And while the group is young and a bit non-traditional in its methods, Karel is thankful for the help and support of the region's more seasoned givers.

"We've just been so lucky to have the support of so many more established nonprofits and philanthropists," she says. "The more established types are excited to see young people getting involved."