

Wean Foundation Deepens Focus on Race Equity and Inclusion and Welcomes New Staff Member

(March 16, 2021 – Warren, Ohio) Maintaining its commitment to center racial equity in its work and using its Strategic Direction: 2019 – 2023 as the framework, members of the Board and leadership team are embedding the Foundation’s values of race equity, resident engagement and a culture of listening into each of its pillars: grantmaking, capacity building, convening and partnerships and operations.

“We’re asking ourselves tough questions about what race equity looks like at the Foundation – and for our partners and the community,” explained Jennifer Roller, Wean Foundation president. “For example, what level of insight and trust do we all need, first, to acknowledge the legacy of racism in our communities and, second, to move forward to support viable solutions that genuinely challenge the conditions that hold problems in place?”

In 2021, the answers to these questions and others will inform a racial equity-centered strategic direction or racial equity theory of change. Or rather, a path forward that ensures equitable access to resources, knowledge and opportunity for those disproportionately impacted, and certainly exacerbated by COVID-19 – communities of color.

First, the Foundation will leverage its role and resources to provoke new thinking and disrupt the status quo. The Foundation’s 2020 Impact Report highlights both past efforts and its ongoing commitment to future strategic investments in 2021 that focus on the realization of thriving, Black-led organizations within our community.

Additionally, more than 500 Mahoning Valley community members

have participated in Foundation-sponsored Race Equity and Inclusion training since 2017. This practical, data-driven experience explores the roots of racism in its institutional and structural forms. Based on the belief that real progress requires a shared understanding of racial injustice realities across all sectors, the Foundation extends an invitation to all residents, partners and organizations to attend the upcoming March or May two-day training. Visit our website to learn more and view the 2021 schedule.

Last, to support this crucial work, the Foundation is pleased to announce that Tara Walker-Pollack has joined the staff as Program Officer, Capacity Building. A native of Youngstown, Tara has a background in community and economic development with eight years of nonprofit experience in roles impacting underresourced communities in both New York City and the Mahoning Valley. In her role, Tara will manage the Capacity Building programming with a special emphasis on incorporating principles of race equity and inclusion.

“I’m very excited to be a part of the Wean Foundation team,” said Tara, “and to partner with residents and organizations to continue creating authentic change. I’ve seen the impact of racial disparities first-hand in my work and I’m looking forward to contributing my experience to build stronger, more equitable communities right here at home.”

Tara earned a Master of Professional Studies, Community and Economic Development from Pennsylvania State University and a Bachelor of Science in communications from the University of Louisville.