

For Immediate Release

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**Eagle Butte, SD –Four Bands Community Fund Wins \$100,000 Great Strides Award
from Northwest Area Foundation**

The Award Recognizes Poverty Reduction Efforts and Successes

ST. PAUL, Minn. (January 25, 2008) – The Northwest Area Foundation today named Four Bands Community Fund of Eagle Butte, S.D., a 2008 Great Strides award winner for its success in private business development and growing assets on the Cheyenne River reservation. The award is given in recognition of innovative strides communities have taken to reduce poverty for the long term. Every year up to four communities are selected for a Great Strides Award; each winner receives \$100,000.

Located on the rolling prairies of the Cheyenne River Reservation, the Four Bands Community Fund is a Native American community development financial institution that addresses the challenges of high unemployment and low wages faced by people in an area of high poverty (49 percent poverty rate for the Cheyenne River Reservation). Four Bands assists small businesses through lending, technical assistance, business education and financial literacy. Since it was established in 2000, Four Bands has helped 70 businesses get their start or expand. The impressive list of businesses include a youth-owned sporting goods store, a plumbing and heating service, a tourism collaborative and a flower and gift shop. Four Bands offers Individual Development Accounts that can be tapped for home ownership, higher education and asset development. An emphasis is placed on training the next generation of entrepreneurs through financial literacy training for youth.

“We believe in and recognize the values and virtues of our communities and support the many talented individuals we serve through integrated asset building on the Cheyenne River Reservation,” said Tanya Fiddler, executive director of Four Bands Community Fund. “Our financial education and business development tools are offered to youth and adults to empower our people to become self-sustaining and self-sufficient.”

Other 2008 Great Strides winners include the Elk City, Idaho, Framing our Community (FOC), Inc.; Glendive, Mont., Community GATE; and Roseburg, Ore., Umpqua Community Development Corporation. The \$100,000 award will go to community organizations to be used for community benefit. Northwest Area Foundation has asked each winner to work with the Foundation to share key

lessons about their efforts and programs so that other communities can learn from their experiences and possibly replicate the success.

“In our work, poverty reduction is neither fast nor easy. This year’s Great Strides winners have proven that by identifying new economic engines communities can make sustainable changes to reduce poverty over the long run. They have valuable lessons to share,” said Kari Schlachtenhaufen, interim president and CEO of the Northwest Area Foundation.

Twenty-three communities from the Northwest Area Foundation’s eight-state region applied for the 2008 Great Strides award. Six finalists hosted on-site visits by the Foundation after which the four winners were selected.

Great Strides Award recipients were selected using the following criteria:

- Inclusiveness: community involvement from diverse sectors and groups.
- Regional impact: interaction with and awareness of other communities facing similar issues in their geographic area.
- Asset-based perspective: recognition of the community’s existing strengths.
- Economic engines: involvement with businesses and other organizations that drive the local economy.
- Leadership: efforts to develop leaders from different public and private sectors, ages and genders.

The Northwest Area Foundation’s mission is to help communities reduce poverty long term. The Foundation's service area includes Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Oregon and Washington – the states once served by the Great Northern Railway, founded by James J. Hill. In 1934, Hill’s son, Louis W. Hill, established the foundation. For additional information about the Great Strides Award and about the Northwest Area Foundation, visit www.nwaf.org or call 651-224-9635.

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