

The Washington Post

Sterling's Orphan Foundation wins 500,000 grant from Jack Kent Cooke Foundation

Washington Post Staff Writer

By *Caitlin Gibson*

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Jenny Latham is getting ready to start a new job in her native Missouri. The 20-year-old former foster child attributes that accomplishment to the work of Sterling's Orphan Foundation of America.

While in the District this summer working with the organization's InternAmerica program, Latham met Rep. Jo Ann Emerson (R-Mo.), thanks to the Orphan Foundation, and was encouraged to apply for a paid internship in Emerson's Missouri office.

"It was amazing that they helped me land a job back home," Latham, a college junior, said of the foundation. "For people who don't really have a family, you know that you can always count on them."

OFA's programs, such as InternAmerica, as well as undergraduate and graduate scholarships for foster kids in financial need, will get a boost from a \$500,000 grant awarded by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation. When the news arrived that OFA had been awarded the grant, the excitement in the organization's Sterling office was palpable.

"We were just elated," said Eileen McCaffrey, OFA's chief executive.

The grant, awarded at the end of July and announced last week, represented a high

level of recognition from an esteemed organization, McCaffrey said, a nod that sent morale soaring.

"They are such a dynamic organization," McCaffrey said of the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, which provides scholarships and grants to aid financially disadvantaged students and is funded entirely by the billion-dollar estate of the late Jack Kent Cooke, former owner of the Washington Redskins.

"It was quite a recognition for our program to have been selected. We feel like as an organization we will also grow and learn by working with them," McCaffrey said.

Beyond the money for scholarships, McCaffrey said the grant acknowledged the importance of OFA's comprehensive outreach.

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"We feel really strongly that our young people are really the neediest of the needy," she said. "It's not just funding that our young people need. They need this holistic support system that we provide."

That attention to detail is appreciated by students such as Latham, who said she values the OFA's personal touches that have made her feel genuinely cared for over the years.

"They send out care packages twice a year," she said. "It really brightens your day when you get it, to know that someone's thinking of you. . . . They do the really, really big things, but they also take the time to pay attention to the small things."

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