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# News for our partners and friends | November 2011

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It's exciting when an organization gets to take big leaps forward. At Main Street Project, we've been fortunate to have a couple of those high-five moments over the last several months. But the daily small steps and the voices of individual leaders, colleagues and community members help keep us inspired and connected to our mission. This update should give you a feel for both.

And yes, - we're participating in [Give to the Max Day on Nov. 16](#), so you'll be hearing from us again soon!

**Main Street**  
**Project**

We see possibilities.

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## Latino agripreneurs graduate from Rural Enterprise Center training



This September, 21 aspiring Latino farmers successfully completed the first formal agripreneur training in Northfield, Minnesota. Participants learned fundamental business planning and the protocols of raising poultry as part of a sustainable, small-scale agricultural system.

This is an exciting milestone for the program, and an extraordinary accomplishment for each of the trainees who committed to working hard to create a better life for their families. Said one graduate, "Everything I learned is going to help me! This training is something that will help a small family business grow." [Read our blog post](#) to learn more.

## \$100,000 grant from SMIF will

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*Thanks to individual donors and funders for supporting our Rural Enterprise Center and media justice program work.*

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Media Democracy Fund, a hosted project of the Proteus Fund

Northwest Area Foundation

Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation

North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Fund (NCR-SARE)

## launch new agripreneur incubator process



"We commend this innovative effort by the Rural Enterprise Center," said Tim Penny, President/CEO of the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (SMIF), who awarded the 'One Big Thing' grant to Main Street Project at their 25th Anniversary luncheon on Oct. 13. Through the new incubator process, recent training graduates will

receive individualized business planning and production coaching, access to marketing options and a compatible revolving loan fund, and transitional access to land and poultry production facilities - all critical support elements to help new farmers achieve their business income goals.

As part of the grant, we'll be working to raise matching funds to support the incubator process, including a revolving loan fund specifically for agripreneurs. We're extremely grateful for SMIF's continued investment in the program, and the potential to leverage their grant to successfully support more immigrant families walking a path out of poverty. [Read SMIF's announcement](#) (PDF).

## Diverse, low-income Twin Cities neighborhoods gearing up for community radio opportunity



"With local community radio, we can reframe our story and build

community," was how Francisco Segovia, director of Waite House, explained his organization's involvement in the Twin Cities Low-Power FM Collaboration. Main Street Project is mobilizing community organizations in the Frogtown (St. Paul) and Phillips (Minneapolis) neighborhoods to apply for two community radio licenses in 2012 - available as a result of the passage of the Local Community Radio Act.

These neighborhoods are the most diverse in the Twin Cities. Both are challenged by high foreclosure and unemployment rates, and political and economic disinvestment. The groups' vision is to rebuild their communities by building community radio stations. Neighborhood residents will be empowered to share their traditions, language and culture, and represent local challenges and solutions with their own voices. In addition to Waite House, planning partners include HOPE Community, Little Earth of United Tribes, Somali American Community and Frogtown Neighborhood Association. [Read more about the collaboration.](#)

## Main Street Project hosts meeting with FCC Commissioner Copps, community leaders in Minneapolis



"There's something fundamentally wrong in media, and unless we fix it, there's going to be something even more fundamentally wrong with our democracy," is how Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Commissioner Michael Copps began his remarks at an Oct. 5 roundtable

discussion hosted by Main Street Project and the Center for Media Justice.

Copps met with leaders from 12 community-based organizations about a host of pressing issues - from the lack of solid journalism and public interest guidelines, to the broken Universal Service Fund (USF), the "cable-ization" of the Internet, lack of minority and female media ownership, and the continued trend towards media consolidation.

The commissioner encouraged the group to keep up their efforts: "We've got to get organized. Anything we can do, we've got to be doing." [Watch video](#) by Ann Treacy (Blandin on Broadband).

## Rural Enterprise Center story comes to 2011 National Immigrant Integration Conference (NIIC)

"Start building a strong support infrastructure from the very beginning" was one of the program insights shared by program director Reginaldo (Regi) Haslett-Marroquin at Seattle's [NIIC gathering](#). Regi participated in a panel discussion led by Ruby Lee, Program Director at Northwest Area Foundation titled "Building Pathways to Immigrant Prosperity through Economic Integration" - part of the conference's first-ever economic development track. The presentation about our systems-based approach generated lots of interest from foundations and community organizations looking to replicate the approach in other states.

## Community organizations urge MN Attorney General to join DOJ in blocking AT&T/T-Mobile merger

"The mathematics of the merger don't add up to anything good for Minnesotans," explained Steven Renderos, media justice program director at Main Street Project. That's why Main Street Project joined nine other community-based organizations in filing a letter with Minnesota Attorney General Lori Swanson. Our letter urged her to support and participate in the anti-trust lawsuit filed by the Department of Justice to block the \$39 billion AT&T / T-Mobile merger on behalf of community members and consumers.

If the merger is approved, Minnesotans could see mobile service plans increase by as much as \$50 a month with only two providers competing against one another.

- [Read the letter to AG Swanson](#) (PDF).
- [Learn more about the campaign](#) to stop the merger.

## Black Voices for Internet Freedom coalition launches



Main Street Project is one of eleven local, regional and national organizations that joined together to keep the Internet open and free from

discrimination. [Watch video highlights](#) from the September launch featuring amalia deloney, Main Street Project board member and Media Policy Field Director for the Center for Media Justice. Better yet, [add our voice and support to Black Voices for Internet Freedom](#).

## People's Tech monthly trainings moving forward



These free monthly workshops for community leaders and organizations are focused on building knowledge and skills so we can shape and produce our own media.

Narrative-based organizing is the Nov. 19 topic. [Check out the full schedule here](#).

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