EVERYDAY DEMOCRACY BUILDING NATIONWIDE NETWORK WITH NEW PARTNERS IN MONTANA, OHIO AND SOUTH DAKOTA

HARTFORD, CT – Everyday Democracy, a national organization leading in the field of dialogue and deliberation to promote a stronger, more equitable democracy, is pleased to announce its newest “Anchor Partners” – Project Ujima, based in Akron, Ohio; Montana State University Extension’s Community Development arm in Bozeman, Montana; and most recently, SDSU Extension in South Dakota. Everyday Democracy Anchor Partners are leaders in addressing structural racism, engaging all different kinds of people in public dialogue, and linking dialogue to action and positive change. They are selected for their effective work and dedication to shared principles.

“With these additions there are now seven Everyday Democracy anchors in various regions of the country” said Martha McCoy, Everyday Democracy’s Executive Director. “We are excited at the ways these partners are building and sustaining civic infrastructure in their states and regions. Everyday Democracy supports anchor partners as they support communities in their region with training and coaching. Working together, we can expand, diversify and nurture leadership for participatory democracy with a racial equity lens.

“Our ultimate aim,” she added, “is to develop and work with anchor partners in every part of the U.S., to strengthen the movement for participatory, equitable democracy.”

Everyday Democracy first worked with the teams at Montana State University and South Dakota State University Extensions from 2003 – 2010, partnering with the Northwest Area Foundation and the Horizons project with the goal of helping rural municipal and tribal communities take on the issues of poverty through leadership training, community organizing and assisting in Dialogue to Change programs. Everyday Democracy first worked with Project Ujima beginning in 2015 to address the racial gap in infant mortality.
The new Anchor Partnership agreements will both strengthen the work being done in these communities through technical assistance and capacity building as well as provide value for the entire Everyday Democracy Anchor Partner network through the ongoing sharing of best practices and lessons learned.

The Ohio, Montana and South Dakota organizations join a distinguished list of Anchor Partners that are making a difference in their respective regions: New Hampshire Listens, NHListens.org; West Virginia Center for Civic Life, wvcivillife.org; InterFaith Works of Central NY, interfaithworkscny.org; and Housing Partnership of West Palm Beach, Florida, www.cp-cto.org.

“We are honored to partner with Everyday Democracy and the other anchor partners in the work of empowering citizens and strengthening communities. This partnership will enhance Project Ujima’s capacity to become a sustainable grassroots organization in Akron, dedicated to helping those most in need discover their power to be a voice and force for change.”

Crystal Jones, Executive Director, Project Ujima.

“I’m excited to be representing Montana State University Community Development and work with Everyday Democracy on this collaborative effort. Since our time working together many years ago on the Horizons program, I have looked forward to opportunities to work cooperatively, share resources, and partner to accomplish our mutual goals. From our many native communities, to the rural towns across the state, to our fast growing cities, Montana is fortunate to be an anchor partner with our friends at Everyday Democracy.”

Paul LaChapelle – Community Development Specialist Montana State University Extension

“Everyday Democracy is a natural partner for the work of the SDSU Extension Community Vitality team. SDSU Extension has already utilized their materials addressing racism in several programs. We are excited to be an Anchor Partner and the benefit it will bring to South Dakota communities.”

Kenneth Sherin, SDSU Extension Community Vitality Program Director

Valeriano Ramos, Director of Strategic Alliances at Everyday Democracy, who implements the anchor partnership strategy, explains: “Anchor partners help build a civic infrastructure for equitable, democratic change in our country. We learn from them and they learn from us and each other about ways to strengthen our toolkits and practices to support authentic community participation for local problem-solving and decision-making.”

If you know of an organization or institution that may be interested in becoming an Everyday Democracy Anchor Partner, contact Valeriano Ramos at: vramos@everyday-democracy.org or call 860-727-5917.

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OHIO – Project Ujima is a grassroots community engagement organization that teaches and facilitates
“circle” processes that enable diverse citizens to come together, discuss issues of shared concern, develop relationships of trust, discover common ground, and go from talk to action. The organization is named after the third principle of Kwanzaa, which means “Collective Work and Responsibility: To build and maintain our community together and make our brother’s and sister’s problems our problems and to solve them together.” More information is at www.projectujima-inc.org.

MONTANA – Montana State University Extension – Community Development Agents and Specialists with the Montana State University Extension Community Development program view the community, in all its diverse forms, as the foundation on which to build a healthy, thriving society. Our mission is to improve the well-being of individuals, families and communities using research-based programs that educate and build community capacity. For generations, professionals within the Community Development program of MSU Extension have worked across the spectrum of community needs. More information is at http://msucommunitydevelopment.org/.

SOUTH DAKOTA – SDSU Extension SDSU Extension’s mission is to empower citizens to be more competitive in a growing global economy through education and technical training or assistance. Our purpose is to foster a learning community environment that empowers citizens to advocate for sustainable change that will strengthen agriculture, natural resources, youth, families and the communities of South Dakota.

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Everyday Democracy is a project of The Paul J. Aicher Foundation, a private operating foundation dedicated to strengthening deliberative democracy and improving the quality of public life in the United States. Since its inception, Everyday Democracy, based in Hartford, CT, has worked with more than 600 communities by providing advice, training, tools and resources. It also partners with national and local organizations to strengthen the field of dialogue and deliberation and promote a stronger, more equitable democracy. Everyday Democracy’s vision is a democracy where all voices are valued, and where participation and racial equity become a permanent part of the way we work as a country at the local, state and national levels. More information is at http://www.everyday-democracy.org