



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Grameen America Launches Branch in Omaha, Nebraska

May 27, 2009, Omaha, NE – Grameen America (www.grameenamerica.com), a microfinance institution headquartered in New York and founded by Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus, announced today that it will launch its next branch in Omaha, Nebraska. The move to Omaha comes as Grameen America begins expanding nationally to build on its initial success in Queens, New York.

Grameen America selected Omaha as its second branch location because of strong local support and demand for microfinance services. The branch will initially serve the low-income community in South Omaha and will subsequently expand operations to other areas. The company expects to extend loans to at least 250 borrowers in its first year of operations. Future projections call for the branch to grow its borrower base and become a fully sustainable social business in five years.

Grameen America CEO Stephen Vogel, who took the helm of the organization after a successful business and investing career, said: "Grameen America is thrilled to be opening in Omaha. In less than eighteen months after opening in Queens, we have seen our borrowers show their willingness and ability to take control of their lives, their financial positions, and their futures. With Grameen America, they are creating a culture of trust, savings, and hard work and building better lives for themselves and their children. Whether in Bangladesh, New York, or Nebraska, Grameen believes that all people have the skill, motivation, and ability to care for themselves and their families. We simply provide access to small, low-interest, no-collateral loans to start or expand small business activities. We give the tools, and the borrowers do the work."

Grameen America launched its first branch in January 2008 in the Jackson Heights neighborhood of Queens, New York. To date, the Queens branch has lent more than \$1.6 million to 660 women living at or below the poverty line. The average loan size to date is \$2,200. At a time when jobs are scarce, these microloans help people generate income, build savings, and take control of their financial situations.

Muhammad Yunus had this to say: "Grameen America's success and growth in 2008 came in an environment where banks were cutting back on loans. Now, in 2009, Grameen America is expanding its operation to Omaha and continuing with its mission to make loans to low income people as a solution to

economic hardships across the United States. Every community in the US may consider having a Grameen America branch as a means of addressing the hardship caused by the financial crisis.”

Grameen America follows the same Grameen peer-group lending model, which has proven successful over several decades in Bangladesh and in many other countries across the world. Grameen America borrowers must form groups of five, meet weekly, and use their microloans for entrepreneurial, income-generating activities. Each Grameen America branch is led by an experienced senior manager from Grameen Bank. The managers move from Bangladesh to the United States and immerse themselves in the local culture. The Queens branch has been led by Shah Newaz, who started working for Muhammad Yunus at the Grameen Bank in 1982.

The Omaha branch will be led by another Grameen veteran, Habib Chowdhury. Mr. Chowdhury has been managing Grameen microcredit programs since 1985. In 2000, Mr. Chowdhury launched and managed a Grameen microcredit program in Kosovo to provide credit to war victims, widows, and displaced women. When Mr. Chowdhury arrived in Kosovo in 2000 local people were skeptical about microfinance. Today the program has over 14,000 borrowers and is growing.

Grameen America’s early success and its current launch in Omaha suggest that microcredit is an effective tool in the fight against poverty in the United States.

About Grameen America

Grameen America is a non-profit microfinance institution whose mission is to alleviate poverty through entrepreneurship by offering loans, savings programs, credit establishment, and financial education to the working poor in the United States. Grameen America was founded by Muhammad Yunus, who gained recognition worldwide when he and the Grameen Bank jointly received the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize for their innovative efforts to alleviate poverty in Bangladesh. Muhammad Yunus made his first loan with \$27 dollars out of his own pocket to 42 Bangladeshi villagers 1976. Today Grameen Bank has nearly eight million borrowers and disburses more than \$100 million each month while maintaining a 98% repayment rate. Muhammad Yunus serves as Chairman of the Board of Directors of Grameen America.

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