

PRESS RELEASE

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Community Foundation Grants Focus on Youth, Wellness

The Board of the Grand Haven Area Community Foundation (GHACF), together with the GHACF Youth Advisory Council (YAC), is pleased to announce nine second-round grant awards, totaling \$203,015 in support of Northwest Ottawa County and our surrounding communities. This includes a \$25,000 grant to the City of Ferrysburg for a new playground at Fire Barn Park at the intersection of 174th Avenue and North Shore Road.

Located on one of Ferrysburg's main thoroughfares, Fire Barn Park offers recreation to lakeshore visitors, local schools and daycares, as well as area residents. The equipment on the existing playground is over 45 years old and limited in use, but the new park equipment will be universally accessible to serve the needs of all. The design will be firefighter-themed to reflect the name of the park and the adjacent fire department, and a firehose climbing wall, a firepole, and a ladder truck with a steering wheel are among some of the new playscape equipment. The new playground will be constructed by volunteers from the community the last week of September.

"The City of Ferrysburg is thankful to the Grand Haven Area Community Foundation for awarding a \$25,000 grant for the City's Fire Barn Playground Equipment campaign," said Craig Bessinger, City Manager of the City of Ferrysburg. "This grant puts the campaign near the goal of \$104,000 for the playground equipment." Donations are still being accepted and can be made to the City of Ferrysburg.

Other grants awarded:

- **Children's Advocacy Center** – \$93,125 for "Kidz Have Rights Evidence-Informed Updates," which will expand and update their "Body Safety Training" program to include students in Kindergarten, 2nd grade, and 4th grade to provide a fully comprehensive program for lower elementary students (K-4). Ottawa County has the highest rate of reported sexual abuse in the State of Michigan. By increasing Body Safety Training to

encompass Kindergarten–4th graders, the number of children reached will more than double from approximately 8,000 to 19,000. In an effort to guarantee program success, funding is also designated for supplies and materials for schools within the Tri-Cities, Allendale, and Coopersville school districts over the next three years.

- **The Tri-Cities Family YMCA** – \$15,000 for “Tri-Cities Family YMCA Young Adult Leadership and Development Program,” a comprehensive leadership development program for camp counselors ages 18-22. The program will impact approximately 28 counselors and camp staff annually and will transform summer employment at the Y into an opportunity to further enhance post-secondary and career success. In addition to approximately 25 hours of direct instruction and individual coaching sessions through a partnership with the Chamber of Commerce of Grand Haven, Spring Lake and Ferrysburg, participants will strengthen “soft” skills such as communication, collaboration, and confidence—all of which contribute to effective and harmonious interactions with peers and colleagues.
- **Michigan Edge Mountain Biking Association** – \$15,000 for “Mosquito Creek Trails,” the second phase of a three-phase plan to create more than 10 miles of regional, year-round, multi-use, professionally-built trails in central Muskegon County. Ottawa County currently has three trail systems for mountain bikers—Hofma Park, Bass River Recreation Area, and Upper Macatawa—but none are longer than four miles and some provide limited access throughout the year. Additionally, Ottawa County lacks the topographic relief for bike trails outside of the sand dunes, which are too fragile of an ecosystem to cut in a system of mountain bike trails. The Mosquito Creek Trails will be functional for a variety of sports and leisure activity including mountain biking, fat-tire biking, cross country skiing, hiking, running, and walking.
- **Northwest Ottawa County Chamber Foundation** – \$15,000 to sustain and develop the health and wellness programming at the “Grand Haven Farmers Market and Spring Lake Farm and Garden Market.” Programming includes, but is not limited to, the management of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Double Up Food Bucks (DUFb), Prescription for Health, Senior Project Fresh, WIC, and the Power of Produce Kids Club. Each of these programs at the Grand Haven Farmers Market and Spring Lake Farm and Garden Market increases access to healthy, fresh, and locally grown foods for those who may otherwise experience financial limitations, while also enhancing our local economy by reimbursing local food growers and producers.
- **Grand Haven Musical Fountain Audio Project** – \$20,000 to the “Musical Fountain – Sound Audio Project” to help cover the additional expenses needed to repair the speaker houses. The additional funds will allow contractors to repair the concrete slab on which the houses sit.

- **The City of Grand Haven** – \$13,200 to combat the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, an invasive insect from Asia that threatens the 3500+ hemlock trees in our community, the majority of which are located in Duncan Woods and Mulligan’s Hollow. Many of those trees could die in the next 5-7 years if not properly treated.

The Youth Advisory Council awarded the following grants:

- **Extended Grace** – \$5,000 to support “Gaining Momentum: An Event to Address Mental Illness and Cultural Awareness.” This event aims to help people understand and identify the symptoms of anxiety, create an open dialogue between teens and parents around mental health using facilitated conversations, and incorporate cultural awareness opportunities for both youth and their parents. The keynote speaker is Fable the Poet, a nationally recognized speaker on youth mental health.
- **Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Lakeshore** – \$1,690 for “Cooking Matters for Teens,” a six-week class that will expose ‘littles’ and their ‘bigs’ to healthy eating habits and nutrition education. They will also take a trip to the local Farmer’s Market to purchase ingredients for the class. Healthy eating habits are a product of an environment. The program strives to provide students with the resources to make healthy meals on a budget in a supportive environment.

The Grand Haven Area Community Foundation is a public, charitable organization serving the Northwest Ottawa County community since 1971. GHACF is regularly recognized as a top 100 Community Foundation in the nation and is the 8th largest community foundation in the State of Michigan. It encourages philanthropy by individuals, families, corporations, and organizations, and serves as a steward of their charitable funds and legacies. In addition to awarding grants, the Foundation offers technical support to nonprofits, convenes community leaders on issues of importance, and advocates for the nonprofit sector. For more information visit ghacf.org.

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