

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Forward Wayne County Awards NICE! Grants

Wayne County, Indiana— Forward Wayne County (FWC) has awarded more than \$20,000 to NICE! projects across the county. NICE! (Neighborhood Involvement & Community Engagement) is a six week, asset-based community development program developed by Forward Wayne County with support from Lilly Endowment Inc. Gift VII grant award.

NICE! provided no-cost training on how to bring a group together, create a project by engaging the community, and how to use the project to better neighborhoods and communities across the county. Twenty-two participants in three cohorts, representing various organizations and communities, completed the training. These participants had the opportunity to apply for a place-making grant to bring their project to life.

“We are thrilled with the success of this program,” said Acacia St. John, Program Manager for Forward Wayne County. “We loved seeing the mix of organizations and every day citizens that wanted to learn about how they can make their communities better.”

“A fascinating aspect of the cohorts is how the participants defined community or neighborhood,” said Rebecca Gilliam, Executive Director of the Wayne County Foundation. “In some cases, it was in the traditional sense. For others, it was a street, a building, a school system, or a small group of people. But their goals were the same: how do we make it stronger?”

Projects Awarded

Children’s Community Garden, \$1,500 to Laurissa Bertsch with support from Western Wayne Heritage, Inc.

The project, located in a high-traffic area of downtown Cambridge City, aims to create a space for families to connect through a shared positive experience. It will include a sensory flower garden, a book box installation, bottle tree, seating for children and adults, and other sensory nature kits.

Community Kitchen, \$1,500 to Tri-County Good Samaritans

TCGS will purchase equipment for their community kitchen in the Vaile neighborhood. Their goal is to show low-income families a path to independence through their Changing Lives Forever program. Staff are certified trainers and will provide classes on healthy cooking, creating food products, and entrepreneurship.

Community Engagement Block Party, \$1,500 to Good News Habitat

GNH will host a block party in community celebration of their latest rehabbed home in the Fairview neighborhood. They also hope to provide home tours. GNH will be engaging with residents to demonstrate a commitment to revitalization efforts in the neighborhood. They hope their efforts will also help revive the Fairview Neighborhood Association.

Community Engagement Block Party, \$2,000 to Townsend Community Center, Inc.

Townsend will hold a block party and community open house to introduce their organization to the Elizabeth Starr neighborhood in their new location. The block party will provide a venue to survey the community needs and share how Townsend can serve the residents. Tours of the new facility will be given and staff will introduce ways the community can utilize the building. Several partner organizations are also planning to attend.

Clear Creek Park Softball Field Improvements, \$2,750 to City of Richmond Parks Department

More than 350 players utilize the softball fields at Clear Creek Park yearly as well as spectators, parents, and others that support the players. The project will engage some of these players to clean up debris, build up the infield, make needed repairs, paint, and install new benches.

Richmond Community Schools Mascot Parkway, \$5,235 to Richmond Community Schools and CityLife

Art students and teachers will create customized banners and feather flags for each school to be displayed locally, along Hub Etchison Parkway, and at school and community events. The goal is to create excitement among students and increase school spirit across the city. The hope is that this will also spread to each school's surrounding neighborhood and that residents will want to get additional flags to put in yards and businesses.

Community Resource Fair and Little Free Libraries, \$6,000 to Boys and Girls Club of Wayne County and Reid Health Community Outreach

The McDaniel Unit in the Westview neighborhood and First Bank Unit in the North neighborhood, with Reid Health Community Outreach, will provide a resource fair for residents in the surrounding neighborhoods. In addition, BGCWC's Keystone club, with support from the Women's Workshop of Richmond, will create and unveil at the resource fairs new community spaces at each location. The community spaces will include Little Free Libraries as well as benches. Several support organizations have signed on to assist.

St. John finished. "It's amazing the innovation that has come out of these participants. They really put thought into the projects. And it has created a domino effect. As others have learned about individual projects, they've asked how they can add to them to make them grander. That's the spirit of Wayne County."

Grant funds were provided through the Wayne County Foundation's Lilly Endowment Inc. Gift VII grant award and Wayne County Area Chamber of Commerce Center for Excellence grant award.

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