



Hutch CF awards more than \$16K in grants

After missing the 2020 awards program because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Hutchinson Community Foundation's annual spring ceremony returned Thursday evening to Chester I. Lewis Plaza.

Nine area nonprofit organizations received a total of \$16,500 in Changemakers at Work Grants as part of the evening's Third Thursday festivities. Changemakers at Work Grants are small funds available to Reno County residents and organizations working on projects that spark community spirit and pride, build social capital, and create opportunities for positive changes that strengthen the county.

"After the pandemic forced the cancellation of our 2020 awards ceremony and then limited this year's meetings to Zoom, being able to gather for these awards and other fun activities was exhilarating, and I think we all truly felt that connection to community we've been craving this past year," said Sarah Blake, Hutchinson Community Foundation program officer.

This year's awards ranged from \$1,150 to \$2,500. The grants are supported by the Fund for Hutchinson, the foundation's unrestricted fund for the ever-changing needs of Reno County.

Grants were awarded by the community foundation's Changemakers at Work Grants Committee made up of board members and Reno County residents selected through an application process. This is the second year of including residents through the application process. Members of the 2021 committee are Loretta Deiker, retired educator and Reno County Food Bank volunteer; Stephfon Hunter, student and leader at Boys & Girls Clubs of Hutchinson; Jeff Johnson, Hutch Rec community events coordinator; Peggy Ruebke, Nickerson mayor and volunteer firefighter; Dazia Simms, student and member of NAACP Youth and Hutchinson Community Foundation's Youth Philanthropy Council; Esmeralda Tovar-Mora, board member; Nicole Waggoner, People's Bank and Trust; Michelle Waln, board member; Kian Williams, student and Hutchinson's Youth Council chair; and Calvin Wright, board member.

Last year's committee members were Kelsi Depew, Seth Dewey, Michelle Inskeep, Jenna Lightsey, Kara Malloy, Arthur Pina, Jon Richardson and Jason Steele.

"Involving a new group of community volunteers in our grant-making process these past two years has been a successful experiment and has really confirmed our belief that the 'wisdom is in the room,'" Blake said. "We've been able to connect with terrific folks who have hearts for

Reno County and want to build on community assets and continue making positive changes so more folks feel connected. That's what this grant cycle is all about."

The following are 2021 grant recipients:

City of Plevna, Community Playground Picnic Table Shelter, \$2,500: Funds will help provide a shelter for picnic tables at the town's community center.

Graber Elementary, Growing Graber, \$1,500: This project will strengthen the school's existing outdoor classroom, providing a continued space for staff, students and families to come together to learn about nature, community pride and the power of collaboration. Funds will be used for gardening supplies, a tower garden, pond chemicals and maintenance, and food for wildlife.

Heartland Arts & Culture Collective, Podcast Network, \$1,150: Heartland Arts & Culture Collective, in partnership with Salt City Sound, will increase community pride and engagement by creating a podcast network for arts and cultural content. The inaugural project will share news important to Hutchinson residents, include interviews with local guests and highlight upcoming community events.

Hutch in Harmony, Chester I. Lewis Plaza Art, \$1,500: Funds will help with the costs of providing plaques under pieces of artwork at Chester I. Lewis Plaza. They would explain the scenes depicted and the history of Lewis' contributions to the civil rights movement so that all who visit the plaza are able to celebrate his work for the community and the entire country.

Hutchinson Art Association, Virtual Kids Art Camp, \$2,000: In response to the pandemic, the art center's virtual art camp is intended to fill the current gap in children's art education and ease teachers' burdens as online educators. Free art supplies will be available to children who wish to participate but for whom costs would be prohibitive.

Hutchinson Municipal Band, Making Space of the Arts in Carey Park, \$2,000: In partnership with the city and with the support of Reno/Hutchinson Arts and Humanities Council and the Hutchinson Community College Music Department, the municipal band will create a simplistic, flexible performing space in Carey Park between the zoo and the Homebuilder's Shelter for municipal band concerts and experimentation of other public outdoor performance gatherings in Carey Park.

Reno County Historical Society, People of Reno County Video Series, \$1,850: This project will celebrate Hutchinson and Reno County's 150th anniversaries by honoring our community and its citizens through engaging videos that put a new spin on collecting and sharing oral histories. Funds will help with the purchase of equipment needed for quality filming and sound recording.

Salt City Pickleball Group, Outdoor Pickleball Court Enhancement, \$2,500: Funds will allow for effective lights on the outdoor courts being renovated at Rice Park so community

members can gather even after dark to play pickleball, a sport growing in popularity in Reno County and across the country.

SculptureArtWalk, Paint the Town Beautiful, \$1,500: SculptureArtWalk will continue its focus on enhancing community pride by working closely with the public on a new, collaborative mural in the downtown Hutchinson area.

Hutchinson Community Foundation's mission is to inspire philanthropy, collaboration and innovative leadership to strengthen Reno County communities. Since 1989, the foundation has granted more than \$86 million to organizations.