



Community foundation grants more than \$48K to Reno County projects

At Hutchinson Community Foundation's UPLIFT 2024, the goals for the evening were to have fun and inspire.

And with nearly 80 guests in attendance at the first-annual event on Nov. 12, a live performance from local musician John Depew, food and drink, a photobooth, a postcard mailing station and plenty of socializing humming through the lobby of Hutchinson's Historic Fox Theatre, the fun part was achieved.

The inspiring part came when guests gathered in the auditorium to celebrate the awarding of more than \$48,000 in grants and listen to presentations from individuals working on transformative projects throughout Reno County.

It was a good way to cap the foundation's 35th year serving Reno County, according to Kari Mailloux, Hutch CF's director of strategic initiatives.

"We were excited to invite our partners and donors together to celebrate and highlight the changemakers who are making progress across Reno County," Mailloux said. "It's so important to make connections between diverse people, organizations, and communities so they all know more about what's happening and what's possible here."

The evening's awards program started with the Gift to Dream Grant. The \$2,500 grant was given in honor of Hutch CF's Legacy Society, made up of donors who have given \$10,000 or more to an endowed fund or who have made an end-of-life financial commitment. Since 2022, Hutch CF has awarded one grant from the Fund for Reno County Endowment to a community benefit organization in Reno County in need of resources to imagine what more is possible to better serve its mission. The previous year's winner selects the recipient from a short application process. The Reno County Museum chose NAMI Reno County to receive this year's grant.

Changemakers at Work grants were awarded next. These 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.

This year's awards ranged from \$1,000 to \$5,000. The grants are supported by the Fund for Reno County Endowment, the foundation's unrestricted fund designed to meet the ever-changing needs of Reno County.

Grants were awarded by the community foundation's Changemakers at Work Grants Committee made up of foundation board members and Reno County residents selected through a public application process. Members of the 2024 committee are Carmon Roberts Agee, Anna Brown, Mary Gere Bridger, Morgan Dorris, Michael Jobe, Noah Khokhar, Mary Nowlan, Nicholas Rouse, Peggy Ruebke and Janna Weber.

The evening ended with Changemaker Chats, a series of short presentations on projects making progress in communities, from Dustin VanScyoc, Pretty Prairie mayor; JK Vann, Hutchinson Human Relations Officer; Jessica Schoening and Valerie Taylor, United Way of Reno County; Jacelyn Chambers, Hutch Rec arts and culture coordinator; and Heather Jobe, Hutchinson NAACP Youth adviser.

The following organizations received Changemakers at Work grants:

Buhler Mennonite Church, \$2,500: Driven by a deep desire to assist those in need, a group of the church's members feel a strong calling to support Ukrainian war refugees. The purpose of the grant funding is to host a Ukrainian war refugee family and, specifically, for funds toward a reliable vehicle for their transportation.

Circles Reno County, \$2,000: Circles Reno County is forging relationships with members of the Oxford House system to train individuals in the Circles model, helping them achieve financial stability and helping to build a more resilient community.

City of Arlington, \$2,450: Grant funding will allow for replacing old equipment and blinds in the community fitness center, helping to provide a clean, updated place to exercise, improving personal fitness and, by extension, the overall health of the community.

Creekside Neighborhood, \$2,206: Grant funding will be used to build safety awareness, visibility and community members' pride in the Bike Boulevard by providing signage in the section of Washington Street within the boundaries of the Creekside Neighborhood.

Emancipation Committee, Hutchinson, KS, \$5,000: Hutchinson's Emancipation Committee intends to present seasonal activities to clarify the history, tradition and significance of the Emancipation Celebration held the first weekend of August every year since at least 1889. Activities will include community engagement training; a New Year's Eve Watch Night Party; a Black History Month program; and a collaborative event with youth organizers of Juneteenth.

Farmington Park Neighborhood, \$2,200: The neighborhood will use funds to celebrate the new amenities of Farmington Park and will extend an invitation to the surrounding community to enjoy the new space. Activities will include block parties around the

neighborhood, doughnuts in the driveway, pancakes in the park, fun with the trail using sidewalk chalk, a celebration event with inflatables and a cookout, and an after-dark event lighting up the new trail.

Founders Neighborhood, \$3,000: The goal of the neighborhood is to plant trees where they are missing from the medians of the Founders Neighborhood's unique boulevards, restoring some of the area's lost character.

Graber Elementary, \$1,000: Grant funding will support Graber youth in reaching their full potential. Through participation in a girls' running club and a boys' book club, students will connect with each other and the community members who serve as volunteers and guests to the groups. These groups will provide the opportunity for students to learn to build a network of safety and belonging that allows them the ability to take risks, accept failures with the wins, and know that anything is possible through the power of connection and self-worth.

Grace Arbor Neighborhood, \$2,000: Plans are in place for a fully equipped park in the Grace Arbor Neighborhood, near the Salvation Army building. The neighborhood group will encourage use of the park by installing signs promoting the park project and holding community events, including a cookout, ice cream social, and barbecue in the space. Grant funds will also be used to send event invitations to neighborhood residents.

Hospice and Homecare of Reno County, \$2,500: Grant funding will be used to improve and repair the Hospice House courtyard water feature. The peacefulness of the courtyard and the water feature improves the quality of life and total well-being of the patients, families and community visitors involved in end-of-life care.

Hutch in Harmony, \$5,000: This project aims to enhance the Chester I. Lewis Plaza by adding two shade structures, making it a more comfortable and inviting venue for outdoor events. By providing much-needed shade, the organization seeks to increase the plaza's usability during the summer months, attract a wider range of visitors and encourage more frequent community engagement.

Hutchinson Friends of the Zoo, \$5,000: With the support of this grant, the zoo will purchase and install a shade structure near the Splash River at the zoo's Nature Playscape, an exhibit that opened in July 2023 and has contributed to a more than 23 percent increase in attendance. The shade will enhance the experience and increase stay time at the exhibit.

Rise Up Reno Prevention Network, \$2,500: Grant funding will support a presentation at YES 2025 by nationally known speaker Bill Cordes. All Reno County fifth- through eighth-grade students are invited to the event hosted by Rise Up Reno. Students will spend a day at Hutchinson High School learning and building leadership skills with high school Rise Up Reno Youth Leaders from Hutchinson, Buhler, Haven and Nickerson who will work with and lead groups in fun projects, presentations and activities.

Sky Ryders Performing Arts Foundation, \$2,500: The Sky Ryders Performing Arts Foundation seeks to increase its presence in Reno County, in local school districts and with other performing arts organizations. The foundation intends to do this through increased marketing, community performances and more instructional clinics. Grant funding will support venue rental, marketing, travel expenses and personnel for instructional clinics.

SW Bricktown Neighborhood, \$3,000: SW Bricktown Park has seen many improvements over the past few years, and neighbors are enjoying the space. Grant funding will add seating to the park, from which adults may supervise playing children thereby encouraging more community members to use the park and interact with each other.

United Way of Reno County, \$3,500: “Holiday Help at the Hub” is a community event designed to connect families in need with multiple service providers and resources in one convenient location, reducing barriers, such as transportation and time. The event will include free meals, child care, activities for children and incentives for attendees. Grant funding will help make these aspects of the event possible.

Hutchinson Community Foundation’s mission is to inspire philanthropy, leadership, and collaboration to strengthen Reno County. Since 1989, the foundation has granted more than \$104 million to organizations.