

Teens work to help other kids

JC Youth for Development keeps growing

Bryce Mayer

Its mission focuses solely on helping the youth of the community, says Caleb Lovelace, outgoing president of the Jennings County Youth for Development (JCYD).

"It feels good to help the kids," Lovelace said after the four-year-old group presented its annual grants recently. "That's why we are all involved with this. It is very gratifying to see the funds we worked to raise going to such good causes."

JCYD, which is made up of Jennings County High School students and operates under the umbrella of the Jennings County Community Foundation, raised money through the 2017-18 school year and gave \$877.82 to the Jennings County Council on Domestic Violence for children's playground and sports equipment at its shelter, and \$372.18 to the Extension Service for the Reading Made Fun program at its annual grant presentation on June 27.

"We not only met our fund-raising goal, we exceeded it by a couple of hundred dollars," said Lovelace, whose term with JCYD has now ended. "Another goal is to grow every year, and I think we have this group positioned to do that." Sally Wood of the Council on Domestic Violence voiced praise for the group.

"It's great to see our youth working to help other kids like this," she said. "This grant will help us a lot. The playground and sports equipment we'll buy with this grant will make it more comfortable for the kids who sometimes stay at the shelter with their mothers."

The Extension's Reading Made Fun program is about inspiring kindergartners to learn to love reading, including giving the youngsters books they can take home as their own. The program has distributed over 12,000 books since it began and the JCYD grant will enable it to purchase another 300 or more.

"You're the future for us," Atina Rozhon of the Extension Service told the JCYD group. "Thank you for what you have done for Jennings County."

"I wish we could have done more and hopefully this group can do that going forward," Lovelace said.

"Myself and the other outgoing members have helped the new JCYD leaders get a head start for next year. They are going to solicit sponsorships from companies and businesses, something we haven't done before. I know they are going to hit it hard."

Since its founding, JCYD has depended on fund-raising events at school that last year included a root



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Sally Wood, third from right, is presented a grant for the Council of Domestic Violence from the Jennings County Youth for Development. From left are Weston Miller, Kent Biehle, Cameron Mills, Anna McDonald, Caleb Lovelace, Wood, Allie Clark and Dalton Grills. Not pictured is Callie Wilder, another JCYD officer.—Submitted Photo



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Atina Rozhon, third from right, is presented a grant for the Extension Services' Reading Made Fun program from the Jennings County Youth for Development. From left are Weston Miller, Kent Biehle, Cameron Mills, Anna McDonald, Caleb Lovelace, Wood, Allie Clark and Dalton Grills.—Submitted Photo

beer float sale, wiffle ball tournament and three-on-three basketball competition.

Lovelace said he and the others were inspired by the grant applications.

"We all want to give back to the community that has given so much to us," he said. "That's why we're involved in JCYF

Joanie Van Horn, Jennings County Community Foundation assistant director, was impressed.

"It was so fun to watch these kids really 'get' the process and be so engaged in carefully choosing these grant recipients," Van Horn said. "They truly understand why it is important to give back and realize how fortunate they are in life.

"It was a great year getting to know them all and we will miss the outgoing seniors. I feel like they are invested in helping these new officers be successful," she added.

Van Horn also noted the extra effort being made toward next year's fundraising.

"After the grant presentations, the seniors even hung around for a while discussing with the younger members how to raise even more money this next year and getting a head start planning so that they could make even more to grant out to deserving nonprofits here in Jennings County," she said. "I really expect great things out of these kids next year."