

Strengthening Jennings Co. community

Community Foundation awards \$10,000 to 7 groups in annual grants

Bryce Mayer

Community matters to the Jennings County Community Foundation. The nonprofit agency showed that last week when it distributed \$10,000 to seven groups for a variety of projects as part of its 10th annual Competitive Community Grant Program.

"These organizations and the projects they do make us stronger as a community," said Barb Shaw, JCCF director. "The Foundation is grateful to be part of this."

The Purdue Extension Cooperative Service in Jennings County received an extra \$500 on top of its grant as part of a special drawing to mark the 10th anniversary of the JCCF grants. That money will go toward the Extension's Reading Made Fun Program. The program encourages kindergarten-age children to read by not only having volunteers read and interact with them, but also handing out books for the youngsters to own.

"We just don't read to the children, we form a dialogue with them," said Beth Steiner, a volunteer in the program. "I have had kids spot me in a store and say, 'There's the reading lady!' It's exciting."

Through the Reading Made Fun program, the Extension has given out over 10,000 books.

"So many of these kids don't own a book until we give them one," said Atina Rozhon, Extension educator. "It definitely has an impact."

Other grants went to the Jennings County Youth Foundation for its Affordable Christmas project, the Senior Resource Center for its theme dances, Advocates for Children for court appointed special advocate recruitment, the Economic Development Commission for its Manufacturing Day program in which middle school students tour local industries, the Jennings County Players for wireless microphones, St. Mary's School for its public playground upgrade and the Jennings County Historical Society for its festivals.

Representatives from each group spoke about their projects at the breakfast held Thursday at the Community Foundation Center. Barbara Galliher of the Youth Foundation got emotional when she talked about the Affordable Christmas that involves giving families in need discounted costs on toys and other gifts for their children.



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Louise Branham, left, of the Jennings County Historical Society and Sandy Vance of the Community Foundation share a laugh with the audience at the Competitive Community Grant awards breakfast. The Historical Society was one of seven groups awarded grants from the Foundation—Staff Photo by Bryce Mayer



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Jennings County Community Foundation members are joined by grant recipient representatives at Thursday's awards breakfast. Row 1: Barb Shaw, Atina Rozhon, Sara Kovacich, Lori Brown, Louise Malcomb, Barbara Galliher, Sandy Vance, Pat Dawson; row 2: Richard Adrian, Alisa Gasper, Beth Steiner, Tom Taylor, Ruth Bosch, Jaime Greathouse, Sunshine Galliher, Trish Speer, Wade Eaglin, Jane Habenick, Kathryn Johnson.—Staff Photo by Bryce Mayer

"We are giving these families a hand up, not a handout," she said amid tears. "They are too proud to take anything for free. That's why this program is so valuable."

All of the projects are worthwhile, noted Shaw.

"The stories we have heard are so warm and compelling," the Foundation director added. "Everyone at the Foundation is pleased that we can give them this boost from these grants."