

AARP: Plan to connect seniors during pandemic wins AARP Small Dollar, Big Impact grant

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Milwaukee, Wisconsin – A proposal to connect isolated Milwaukee seniors with resources and information that can help them better cope with this pandemic has been selected to receive one of AARP Wisconsin's "Small Dollar, Big Impact" grants.

These grants are being awarded monthly in 2020 to projects in communities across Wisconsin that are designed to improve communities and make them better places for everyone to live, work and play as they age.

The \$1,000 grant will be awarded to Serving Older Adults of Southeast Wisconsin, which manages five senior centers in Milwaukee and had more than 5,000 older adults pass through their doors in 2019.

"We are so grateful to AARP for this grant and for their partnership in providing resources for older adults," said Cathy Wood, President/CEO of Serving Older Adults.

During the pandemic, these five senior centers have been closed, but Serving Older Adults has worked to connect seniors through wellness calls as well as virtual and outdoor programming.

"We continue to offer daily lunches through drive-through and delivery, and this program has more than doubled during this time," Wood said. "It has been difficult to connect with all the participants through email and phone calls."

Serving Older Adults is planning to use the grant money to create and send out a

one-time mailing to all 5,000 participants to keep them informed of resources available to them, “and to let them know that we are still here and available to help,” Wood said.

“This grant will help us make a connection to the seniors we serve through a newsletter designed to help them get resources they need and let them know we are thinking of them and connect them to services in the community.

“A mailing to the 5,000 seniors we serve is the only way for us to reach each and every one of the participants who have passed through our doors and provide them with a lifeline to resources and activities that we are currently offering during this time of sheltering at home and ways for them to get involved from the comfort of their homes,” Wood said.

AARP Wisconsin’s “Small Dollar, Big Impact” grants are being awarded once a month from June through November. Judges selected this project after receiving dozens of proposals. All projects must be completed within 60 days from winner announcement.

This newsletter project fits perfectly with the spirit and intent of our grant program, said AARP Wisconsin State Director Sam Wilson. “Our goal is to support communities as they make positive changes that inspire long-term progress on livable issues. Keeping seniors informed and less isolated during this pandemic hits that nail right on the head.”

“These grants are exactly what the name describes – short-term, low-cost solutions that could have remarkable impacts on the shaping of neighborhoods and cities,” said Darrin Wasniewski, Associate State Director of Community Outreach for AARP Wisconsin.

“There are so many great ideas and proposals for making life better in communities across Wisconsin. We know how impactful \$1,000 can be. This is our way of extending some seed money to get these projects off the ground.”

The grant program is open to some nonprofits and government entities. Other organizations will be considered on a case-by-case basis. A full listing of requirements, expectations, deadlines, as well as a link to apply for the next round of grants can be found at www.aarp.org/wi