

AARP Wisconsin: Proposal to adorn Rice Lake's Veterans Drive with banners wins AARP WI grant

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Contact: Jim Flaherty, Communications Director
Office 608/ 286-6308 – Cell 608/ 698-0928, jflaherty@aarp.org

RICE LAKE, WI – A proposal by the Rice Lake Main Street Association to honor Veterans by adorning utility street poles along Veterans Drive with boulevard banners and patriotic colored petunia baskets has been selected to receive an AARP Wisconsin “Small Dollar, Big Impact” grant.

Grants are being awarded each month throughout 2021 to projects across Wisconsin that are designed to improve communities and make them better places for everyone to live, work and play as they age. Judges selected this project for a \$1,000 grant after reviewing dozens of proposals submitted from all over the state.

“This project fits perfectly with the spirit and intent of the Small Dollar, Big Impact 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. This proposal hits that nail right on the head.”

De Anna Westphal, Executive Director of the Rice Lake Main Street Association, said she and the entire association “appreciate AARP for granting us the opportunity to help fund this very special project near to our hearts.” She added, “This is a huge blessing and we cannot wait to honor and celebrate our veterans. What a gift to the community to help us put faces to those who have given so much to us and showcase them on our Veterans Drive.”

Westphal said the city has several statue memorials, plaques, benches and stepping stones to honor community members and their families. Along Veterans Drive are additional memorials and flags that showcase the city's patriotism. However, they don't have any faces to go with the names.

With the \$1,000 grant the association plans to purchase the double bracketing system for 11 utility poles and four large petunia baskets in patriotic red, white and blue colors as well as petunia baskets. Additional fundraising will be held to pay for the banners themselves.

"Community members will be able to walk Veterans Drive and honor those who have served and sacrificed for the good of our community and our country. In a world of worry and fear we need to stay grounded as a rural, small city community and celebrate our history and our present brave service members," she said.

The project will honor those who served and continue to serve across all the military branches. The association will work in cooperation with the local American Legion, Honor Guard, and Armory to find families and service members to honor on the Veterans Drive Banners.

"We believe we owe it to our service men and women to be recognized and thanked for their service through this gesture," said Westphal, who added that it will also provide an opportunity for students to learn how the people of Rice Lake and Barron County responded to war throughout the decades.

AARP Wisconsin's launched its "Small Dollar, Big Impact" grant program in 2020 and is now in its second year of helping proposed projects move forward in rural and urban parts of the state.

"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. For more



information on the program, visit www.aarp.org/WIsdbi