

# AARP: Proposal to improve safety of homes for low-income Kenosha residents win AARP WI Small Dollar, Big Impact grant

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KENOSHA, WI – A proposal submitted by the Kenosha Area Family and Aging Services, Inc. (KAFASI) to purchase the materials necessary to make minor repairs that will help low-income Kenosha residents feel safer in their own homes has been selected to receive this month's AARP Wisconsin "Small Dollar, Big Impact" grant.

The \$1,000 grant will enable KAFASI to purchase and install outdoor handrails on three area homes. Each handrail (with related hardware) costs about \$320, but the labor to install them will cost nothing, as the work will be done by KAFASI volunteers.

"KAFASI is so excited to be given this grant from AARP," said Mary Lindqvist, a Program Manager for KAFASI who submitted the grant application. "Aging in place is so important to seniors in our community and this will help us make their homes safer for them. Minor repairs can be costly when living on a limited income. We're so happy AARP is helping us to help others."

AARP Wisconsin is awarding grants each month throughout 2022 to projects across the state 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 after reviewing dozens of proposals submitted from all over Wisconsin.

"These grants are exactly what the name describes – short-term, low-cost solutions that could have a remarkable impact on the shaping of local communities," said

Amber Miller, Associate State Director of Community Outreach for AARP Wisconsin. “This project hits the nail right on the head.”

2 Miller said, “KAFASI’s application really spoke to the AARP HomeFit initiative, which offers education and resources on free or low-cost ways to modify your home to stay safe. We appreciate the hard work and dedication of KAFASI to help our seniors.”

Lindqvist said the whole idea behind KAFASI’s efforts is to help lower income residents make minor repairs to their homes so that they can remain living safely in them as long as possible. The organization does not do major repairs, such as new roofs, but does help with installations of things like ramps, grab bars and handrails that can help residents with safety and mobility issues.

For example, she said, the gutters on the roof of one home were damaged and pouring lots of water on to the homeowners’ steps and walkways. This created a very dangerous safety issue every time that water would freeze. KAFASI’s team was able to assess the situation and repair the gutters to divert the water.

“Anything that we see as a falls risk or a danger to the homeowner will be given top priority for repairs,” Lindqvist said. “People with low incomes want to stay in their homes, but often ignore a minor repair because they can’t afford to pay someone to fix it. But minor problems can quickly become major problems.”

To make a request help, simply call Lindqvist directly and her team will gather information, then send a team out to assess the situation, figure out which repairs are needed and come up with a cost estimate. Projects are prioritized by their current level of safety and danger to the homeowner.

Once the materials are purchased, KAFASI’s volunteers will come out to the home and make the repairs at no cost to the resident. If extensive repairs are needed, Lindqvist said they have contractors who are willing to donate their labor.

Note: KAFASI is not giving out the contact phone number at the moment, as they need to get caught up with the list homes they are currently working on. Lindqvist will publicize that phone number at a future time.

AARP Wisconsin’s launched its “Small Dollar, Big Impact” grant program in 2020 and is now in its third year of helping proposed projects move forward in rural and



urban parts of the state. The grant program is open to some nonprofits and government entities. For more information on the program, visit [www.aarp.org/WIsdbi](http://www.aarp.org/WIsdbi)