

# AARP Wisconsin: 'Cooking with Seniors' proposal wins AARP 'Small Dollar, Big Impact' grant

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**MILWAUKEE, WI** – A proposal submitted by Heart 2 Heart Compassionate Widow's Circles, Inc. to provide additional food, equipment, supplies, and a chef to facilitate two "Cooking with Seniors" classes has been selected to receive this month's AARP Wisconsin "Small Dollar, Big Impact" grant.

AARP Wisconsin is awarding one grant 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 Milwaukee-based project for a \$1,000 grant 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.

"We know how cooking and food can bring people together and Heart 2 Heart Compassionate Widow's Circles, Inc. has done an amazing job offering these classes to our 50-plus community. With this grant they can now offer even more cooking workshops," Miller said.

Genene Hibbler, Founder and Executive Director of Heart 2 Heart, said the group will spend the grant money on food, equipment, supplies and a facilitator for the "Cooking with Seniors" classes.

"With the rising cost of food and other commodities, every dollar has to count in

households within our local communities,” said Hibbler, who added that “cooking is not just a chore that has to be done, it is an opportunity to escape your realities, relieve stress and free your mind. Seniors will be encouraged to be creative while finding joy in cooking in a fun-filled social environment. After all, when seniors cook their own meals, they are able to control their dietary intake while eating healthy and trying new recipes. Our chefs will provide instruction on how to purchase, prepare, cook, and serve a meal.

“With a joyful heart, I thank God for AARP,” Hibbler said. “I believe that AARP has been sent to be an instrument of change by improving communities and making them better places for everyone to live, work and play as they age.”

Heart 2 Heart shares in that mission and is grateful that their “Cooking with Seniors” project was selected for the grant, Hibbler continued. “We look forward to using the award to host two cooking classes for seniors in celebration of Grandparents Day on Sunday, Sept. 11. May God continue to bless AARP to continue the good work that they are doing to be a true example of what kindness, generosity and compassion looks like in Southeast Wisconsin.”

In June 2022, Heart 2 Heart launched “Cooking as Therapy” classes. The group partnered with the Oak Creek Community Center to host a Single Moms and Kids Cooking Class. After the session, they asked participants to complete an evaluation of the class.

Participants said the classes gave them a sense of community while learning new skills and recipes. They said they were able to share meaningful experiences with their children in a loving and healthy environment and had an opportunity to meet new moms and children. They said cooking is a stress reliever that also gives them quality time to develop relationships.

Heart 2 Heart Compassionate Widow’s Circles Inc. is a non-profit organization that works to bridge the gap between church and community while empowering participants towards independence and self-sufficiency via their participation in the Compassionate Widow’s Circles led by ministry leaders.

“Heart 2 Heart Compassionate Widow’s Circles takes a unique and different approach to using cooking to calm the body and clear the minds of each participant,” Hibbler said. “We use cooking as therapy to replenish and improve the mood of seniors, while fostering them to participate in a social activity.”

Hibbler said the group is looking to expand the Cooking as Therapy courses to include a multi-generational educational approach to cooking in a fun, interactive group setting that targets those age 55 and over.

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)