

# Dane County Executive Parisi: Dane County awards \$20,000 to advance equity & access to local food systems through Partners in Equity Food Grant program

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Today, Dane County Executive Joe Parisi announced that ten local agencies have been selected to receive the Tamara D. Grigsby Office of Equity and Inclusion's 2022 Partners in Equity (PIE) Food Grant. The PIE Food Grant was created to encourage the innovative development of projects that advance equity and access in local food systems across Dane County through educational and outreach services. This year's recipients were selected based on proposals intending to address issues related to healthy food access, access to land for growing food, or issues related to food waste and recovery.

"Between ongoing economic uncertainty from the pandemic and record high inflation rates, our community continues to face challenges creating greater access to local food systems and addressing inequities," said Dane County Executive Joe Parisi. "We thank this year's grant recipients for developing innovative food programs that strive to achieve greater equity in our community. By supporting these efforts, we increase opportunity and lift our community up."

In total, \$20,000 will be awarded to recipients of the 2022 PIE Food Grant. 23 applications were received during the application period.

"The Partners in Equity Food Grant continues to provide access and allows more people the ability to grow and consume healthy and affordable foods," said State

Representative and Dane County Board Supervisor Shelia Stubbs.

“I am so proud to support the Dane County PIE Grants,” said Dane County Board Supervisor Michele Ritt. “It is wonderful to see the innovative projects that increase food access and food equity. We have a wealth of expertise and creativity in our community.”

The grant recipients include:

### **Small Grants (\$2,000 or Less) Totaling \$5,000**

Aldo Leopold Foundation – \$535

The PIE grant funds will purchase fruit trees and needed supplies for maintaining fruit production for many years to come—such as a watering system for the fruit trees, trellising support, and trimming equipment for the grapes. Fruit produced at the school garden will be donated along with the vegetables harvested to the on-site food pantry or at community events. The students will also have the opportunity to eat the produce during class sessions when ripe, giving them more access to healthier, fresh produce and creating better eating habits.

Cambridge Farm to School – \$450

In 2017, Cambridge Farm to School (F2S) built two recycle and compost stations that sit alongside the trash receptacles to serve and support the Cambridge Elementary School (K-5) cafeteria to address food waste and recovery efforts. Since then, F2S has continued to support the school food waste program by providing an orientation that educates students and staff for each lunch shift on proper recycling, composting, and trash sorting. The Green Team Recycle-Compost program serves every student and staff member (around 650 people) of Cambridge Elementary School. Each person engages in sorting his or her waste into the proper receptacles daily. The funds from this grant will allow F2S to purchase three 160-gallon compost bins made from recycled material to be set onsite at Cambridge Elementary School, ensuring the sustainability of the recycle-compost program. Students will have the opportunity to see and learn about the whole composting cycle.

Cambridge School District – \$951

The Cambridge School District’s goal is to increase the size of the raised bed vegetable garden. Currently there are 12 beds, and the district is looking to expand

to 36 beds over the coming year. The vegetable beds are planted, cared for, and harvested by the schoolchildren throughout the growing season. All produce grown is eaten directly by the students or donated to the Cambridge Food Pantry on a weekly basis.

#### Mission Nutrition – \$2,000

Funding will allow Mission Nutrition DeForest to upgrade its current written registration system to a technological one. This provides immediate access to translation for those reading another language and for increased dignity and choices for those needing reading assistance. With an independent check in/out system, families will feel safer and more respected, increasing their feelings of security toward attending events and accurate data collection. Efficiency in this process will free up volunteers to do other tasks and help with reporting data. Marketing and communications will impact communities of color and low-income households in a variety of ways by granting access to families that do not have technology readily available. Streamlining the registration process using technology and having resources to create marketing materials will create outcomes of more efficient service for families, increased communication, and awareness of the organization and events within the communities.

#### Youth Empowerment Initiatives – \$1,064

Youth Empowerment Initiatives, Incorporated (YEI) is a non-profit organization that promotes equity for individuals through agriculture, fiscal education, empowerment, and cultural upliftment. The farm is an outdoor classroom targeting community members interested in urban agriculture and, more specifically, for those individuals interested in Scotch Bonnet peppers and West African garden eggs. Since the pandemic, there has been a limited supply of the aforementioned crops, poor quality, or prices have skyrocketed. This project will save food businesses time and money by making high quality, fresh produce available in Dane County.

### **Large Grants (Greater Than \$2,000) Totaling \$15,000**

#### Boys and Girls Club of Dane County – \$2,000

The Boys and Girls Club of Dane County (BGCDC) is seeking funding to implement a Culinary Education Pilot Program at its Taft Street Club location in the heart of Madison. The project will make use of BGCDC's youth membership demographic

and access to low-income neighborhoods primarily served by the Taft Street Club, where the Culinary Ed. Program will be held. Primary partnership will be with The Plate Initiative (TPI), whose goal is to educate youth in the avenues of food access and the importance of mitigating food waste, create pathways to career opportunities in the food industry, and increase conversation around building healthy nutritional habits for underrepresented and underserved youth in Dane County. The ultimate goal of TPI is to educate the students with a well-rounded curriculum to prepare them to enter the food-sphere of Dane County. Partnering with different restaurants in Madison, TPI will educate students in culinary externships to gain real world experience while also addressing the staff shortages in the food industry. BG CDC will enroll a pilot group of 10 students who would go through the program, and adjust the curriculum as the program evolves. The curriculum will teach food safety alongside seven days of hands-on culinary education to students/club members, while adhering to COVID safety protocols.

#### Connect the Dots - \$4,000

Connecting the Dots provides multiple resources to the urban disadvantaged and persons experiencing homelessness to help meet their needs for food, shelter, stable housing and employment, clothing, health care, and mental health care. Connecting the Dots seeks to advance health equity and address social determinants of health by providing street outreach and community events that align health promotion with community engagement. Connect the Dots wants to provide daily meals to unsheltered individuals where they seek refuge. Individuals in need may be found under Highway 30, in South Madison, on State Street, and at traffic intersections around Madison.

#### Groundswell Conservancy - \$3,500

The purpose of this project is to provide access to gardening, a therapeutic antidote to HMoob (Hmong) elders living with PTSD, depression, and dementia. Gardening is a lifelong activity for many HMoob (Hmong) elders, something they learned as children. Such skills are resistant to memory loss and dementia. Gardening as a group reduces social isolation. Being able to feed the family contributes to a sense of worth and gets people out in nature. The COVID pandemic has led to increased loneliness and social isolation. Being able to get hands in the soil, reaping the fruits of their labor, sharing vegetables with friends and families, enjoying time outdoors without the fear of contracting COVID, and utilizing lifelong skills to contribute to the family was crucial to social connectedness and the feeling of meaningfulness. The

HMoob (Hmong) elders will attend programming once a week for 20 weeks. Groundswell Conservancy will provide taxi transportation, a shed structure, picnic tables, land access, spring land preparation, water access, and contract supervision for the participants. The program will assist in removing barriers to land access and land-based access for the HMoob (Hmong) elders who are all low-income residents.

#### Restorative Garden – \$3,500

The project will work with at-risk teens who can help with a large garden. The acre-plus sized garden is located between McFarland and Stoughton. The landowner has donated tons of produce over the last 15+ years to food pantries. Restorative Garden will collaborate with Dane County Human Services (DCHS) to utilize teens with court-ordered community service to assist with the garden. The program will work with a DCHS Program Leader to transport teens to the garden. The landowner, the program leader, and other volunteers will supervise and train the teens. Although teens are completing court ordered community services, youth in the program will learn gardening skills and also be able to help themselves to the produce. They will be encouraged to take home whatever foods they would like to share with their families.

#### River Food Pantry – \$2,000

The River Food Pantry currently expands food access by providing nutritionally balanced lunches to children and adults in ten low-income neighborhoods on days when school cafeterias are not operating, Monday through Saturday, through its mobile lunch program (Munch). Current Munch routes focus on communities on Madison's north and east sides, but PIE Grant support will enable an expansion of services to under-resourced communities on the south side and beyond. The first of the new routes will focus on the Burr Oaks neighborhood, with a distribution location on Cypress Way near Lincoln Elementary School. This location is a Food Access Improvement focus area on the border of Fitchburg and home to a substantial Latinx community. While Munch has previously focused on providing lunches for children, neighborhood partners have reported that there is a broad need for afterschool meals for many community members. In response, The River Food Pantry plans to distribute meals starting at 4pm on Wednesdays; this trial route will be carefully monitored to better inform future expansions in Dane County. This project's primary goal is to provide a reliable source of nutritious meals to children and adults facing food insecurity by expanding weekly access to at least 50 individuals. Secondary goals include regularly incorporating culturally relevant

foods and strengthening community ties between recipients, volunteers, and suppliers.