Press Release

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FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES SPRING 2019 AWARDS

The Otto Schoitz Foundation is pleased to announce the award of $783,000 to organizations aligned with its mission of *improving the health and wellbeing* of the Cedar Valley. Spring 2019 awards will impact more than 105,000 citizens, with a focus on community betterment, education and development, and health and human services. Funded projects help address community-wide concerns, including the lack of available childcare services and youth-related activities. As reported, the need for quality childcare has risen to a critical level. Quality, affordable childcare enables individuals to provide for their families by maintaining employment while boosting the business sector’s ability to retain its workforce and reduce high turn-over. Enhancing youth-related recreational and experiential learning opportunities encourages life-long learning, fitness, and fun. Among the Foundation’s Spring 2019 awards are funds to help increase both quality childcare and youth-related activities, with an emphasis towards organizations assisting economically disadvantaged residents. With this announcement, the Otto Schoitz Foundation has gifted over $4.2 million to the Cedar Valley community since its 2016 inception.

Details of the Foundation’s Spring 2019 awards include:

**Cedar Valley Bicycle Collective** will receive $10,000 to increase bicycle education, awareness, safety, recycling, and reuse. The Collective also manages community-based programs such as Earn A Bike, allowing individuals access to affordable transportation while also learning bicycle maintenance skills.

**City of Waterloo/Leisure Services** will receive $100,000 to enhance recreational options for youth by constructing a skatepark out of the floodway for greater longevity. Park design is being co-created with the Cedarloo Skateboard Association to accommodate skateboards, bikes, and sport wheelchairs.

**City of Waterloo/Community Development** was awarded $30,000 for the Emergency Home Repair Program seeking to mitigate serious health and safety concerns by providing low-income households with rapid financial assistance for electrical, plumbing, heating and cooling, and roof related problems.

**Exceptional Persons, Inc.** will receive $15,000 for the employment service continuum to help persons with disabilities find employment in the general workforce by providing job training, resume building, job interview preparation and support to on-board and maintain employment in the community.

**Family Management Financial Solutions, Inc.** was awarded $5,000 to provide tools and resources – including payee services, credit counseling, mortgage foreclosure mediation, housing counseling, and more - to increase the financial stability of vulnerable individuals.

**Friendship Village Foundation** will receive $150,000 to establish a new childcare center serving staff and the wider community. Childcare will be available for all shifts – 24/7. Services will include a sick-care option and the center will provide intergenerational programming with senior residents. Additionally, the center will offer childcare scholarships based on financial need to both employees and families within the community.

**Future Farmers of America Foundation & Black Hawk County 4-H** will receive $10,000 to promote positive youth development through experiential learning; funds will go towards the development of a pole building and repairs to the current milking parlor.

**George Wyth State Park** was awarded $15,000 to purchase a new floating dock and the shoreline work necessary for installation. The new dock, accessible for all ages and abilities, is estimated to serve nearly 50,000 visitors annually.

**Grin and Grow** will receive $75,000 to provide childcare services for primarily low income families; thereby enabling parents to obtain or maintain employment and achieve greater financial stability.

**House of Hope** will receive $27,000 to launch “Boost,” a job readiness and internship program for single mothers looking to reenter the workforce. Programming will be offered to women living in the organization’s transitional housing as well as other women who have been refered to House of Hope.

**Junior Achievement of Eastern Iowa** will receive $10,000 for financial literacy programming, whereby students learn from adult role models about foundational personal finance and work readiness skills.

**KBBG-FM/Afro American Community Broadcasting, Inc.** was awarded $25,000 to support a youth-led radio program as a part of a larger vision of KBBG as a Community Learning Center. Elementary school students will read books, news, and other items live on air while older students learn about production.

**Leader Valley Foundation** was awarded $130,000 to grow Leader in Me, a program that seeks to equip all students with leadership and life-readiness skills by positively impacting leadership culture.

**Love Inc of the Cedar Valley** was awarded $3,500 for “Bridging the Medical Gap,”a project which provides medical equipment/supplies and medically-related transportation for the uninsured and under-insured, helping to improve the health and wellbeing of the individual while preventing further medical crises.

**National Alliance of Mental Illness of Black Hawk County** will receive $3,000 to continue providing free programs and services for people struggling with mental illness and mental health. Programs, along with advocacy and education, impact all including family, friends, professional providers, and the public.

**Operation Threshold, Inc.** was awarded $45,000 to support summer programming for Cedar Valley Readers, working to close the achievement gap, reduce high school dropout rates, and end inter-generational poverty by providing literacy support and resources before the end of third grade.

**Quota International of Waterloo** will receive $5,000 for “Cops ‘n’ Kids Literacy Project”, promoting literacy through partnership with law enforcement officials in the classroom, at summer free lunch sites and from the officers' squad cars to distribute free books to over 6,000 students on an annual basis.

**Social Action, Inc.** was awarded $52,936 to grow the “Back to Basics Youth Empowerment Program”; a series of community-based programming focused on involving African American youth in community gardening, healthy recreational activities, and youth employment.

**Sunrise Children’s Zoo, Inc.** will receive $36,120 for capital improvements to the animal shed, barn, administrative building, and shade landscaping to continue offering a free opportunity for youth and families to see, learn about and interact with farm animals.

**The Job Foundation** was awarded $25,000 to continue working with youth on financial education, stewardship training, academic achievement and attainment of other key resources to increase financial stability and reduce the risk of financial disadvantage.

**Waterloo Community Playhouse/Black Hawk Children’s Theatre** will receive $10,000 to provide affordable theater performances and guided reflections for Grades 1-8 in the Waterloo Community School District with the aim of sparking curiosity and engaging students in literature through performance.

The Foundation is extremely pleased to partner with these organizations in improving life in the Cedar Valley.

The Otto Schoitz Foundation’s Fall Grant cycle is now open and accepting letters of intent through **July 10, 2019**. Qualifying organizations may apply for funding via the Foundation’s online grant management system found on their [website](http://www.ottoschoitzfoundation.org/) at www.ottoschoitzfoundation.org.