



News Release
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by Barbara Peterson, writer
Williston Economic Development

City Commission approves 20 Community Enhancement Grants

The Williston City Commission has approved 20 Community Enhancement grant applications totaling \$50,000.

The Community Enhancement program is part of the Williston STAR Fund. Each year, up to \$50,000 is allocated to nonprofit groups and projects. Williston Economic Development Executive Director Shawn Wenko said the program helps improve the quality of life in the Williston region.

"This year was a record year for applications," said Wenko. "We had 37 organizations apply with close to \$477,000 in requested funds. Definitely an indication activity is on the upswing."

The Williston STAR Fund board of directors administers the Community Enhancement program. The board reviewed and scored the applications last week. Wenko submitted the board's recommendation tonight to the City Commission for its approval.

The 2018 applications were far-reaching, ranging from infant car seats to hospice care. The four largest recipients were the following: Williston Adult Learning Center, \$5,000 to expand its English Language Learners program in Williston and Watford City; Leadership Williston project, \$5,000 to put vinyl wraps on traffic signal boxes; Fort Union Cooperating Association, \$5,000 to start a new art-related interpretive program for youth; and MonDak Gymnastics Support Group, \$4,000 to fund a gymnastics pit.

Amanda Piesik, Director for Adult Learning, said there is a growing need for English classes in northwestern North Dakota.

"There is a large need to extend this program to McKenzie County," said Piesik. "We have doubled our numbers in that county and several students struggle to drive in for classes and studying online isn't working for them."

Wenko noted that the 2018 projects are located throughout the Williston Trade Region.

"Funds were not limited to projects located in the City of Williston. Several communities in our trade area benefited as well. The Community Enhancement program is a great way for us to say thank you to our surrounding communities for supporting Williston," said Wenko.

Other projects that will receive Community Enhancement funding in 2018 include: Band Day Festival, \$4000; Chokecherry Festival, \$4,000; Entertainment Inc!, \$3,000 for equipment; M-T Saddle Club, \$3,000 for youth rodeo; Save the Maah Daah Hey, \$3,000 to maintain the trail; Northern Plains Oyate, \$3,000 for Pow Wow; Divide County High School, \$2,000 for softball field improvements; MonDak Heritage Center, \$2,000 to develop outside exhibit space; Williston Chamber Level-Up, \$1,500 for keynote speaker; Upper Missouri District Health Unit, \$1,500 for infant car seats; Williston in Leadership Expo, \$1,000 for speaker fees; Williston State College, \$1,000 for speaker; Marketplace for Kids, \$1,000 for event; Hearts for Hospice, \$1,000 for fundraising event; Williston Rotary Club, \$1,000 for Davidson Park project; and Bereavement Tool Kits, \$1,000 for materials.

The Community Enhancement program is funded by the one cent city sales tax.