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Proposal to help West Allis residents build Little Free Libraries wins AARP WI Small Dollar, Big Impact grant

WEST ALLIS, WI – A proposal to help West Allis area residents build Little Free Libraries has been selected to receive an AARP Wisconsin “Small Dollar, Big Impact” grant.

These grants are awarded once a month throughout 2021 to projects across Wisconsin 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 for the \$1,000 grants after reviewing dozens of proposals submitted from all over the state.

“This project fits perfectly with the spirit and intent of the Small Dollar, Big Impact grant program,” said AARP Wisconsin State Director Sam Wilson. “Our goal is to support communities as they make positive changes that inspire long-term progress on livable issues. This proposal hits that nail right on the head.”

The grant will go to the East Allis Neighborhood Association, which plans to hold a one-time event for area residents to build their own Little Free Libraries. Jon Cervantes, president of the association, said the grant money will help the group purchase the basic materials needed to construct the little libraries, which people can then take home, install on their properties, and fill with their own books for neighbors to enjoy at no charge.

The neighborhood association will also provide all the tools and hands-on assistance for people to assemble their own libraries during the event, which will be held on a date and location to be determined later.

“This is a fantastic opportunity to get more Little Free Libraries out to communities,” said Cervantes, who thanked AARP Wisconsin for the grant. “I don’t know of anyone else out there who is doing anything to support Little Free Libraries, so this is great.”

Cervantes said the association’s mission is to promote neighborhood unity through artistic and ecological projects. This project will promote hands-on creativity by building something that will be shared by neighbors and bring the joy of reading to more people.

The grant will enable the group to purchase materials for up to 15 Little Free Libraries. If more materials are needed, Cervantes is hoping for contributions from participants. Once a date, time and location are set for the event, it will be posted on the association’s Facebook page: facebook.com/EANAwestallis.

AARP Wisconsin’s launched its “Small Dollar, Big Impact” grant program in 2020 and is now in its second year of helping proposed projects move forward in rural and urban parts of the state. All projects must be completed within 60 days from winner announcement.

“These grants are exactly what the name describes – short-term, low-cost solutions that could have remarkable impacts on the shaping of neighborhoods and cities,” said Darrin Wasniewski, Associate State Director of Community Outreach for AARP Wisconsin.

“There are so many great ideas and proposals for making life better in communities across Wisconsin. We know how impactful \$1,000 can be. This is our way of extending some seed money to get these projects off the ground.”

The grant program is open to some nonprofits and government entities. For more information on the program, visit www.aarp.org/WIsdbi

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AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, with a membership of more than 37 million, that helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare, employment security and retirement planning. We advocate for consumers in the marketplace by selecting products and services of high quality and value to carry the AARP name as well as help our members obtain discounts on a wide range of products, travel, and services. A trusted source for lifestyle tips, news and educational information, AARP produces AARP The Magazine, the world’s largest circulation magazine; AARP Bulletin; www.aarp.org; AARP TV & Radio; AARP Books; and AARP VIVA, a bilingual news source. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to political campaigns or candidates. The AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. AARP has staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Learn more at www.aarp.org.