

# **PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Youth Grantmakers Support Grants Benefitting Youth and Their Families**

The Grand Haven Area Community Foundation's (GHACF) Youth Advisory Council (YAC) is pleased to announce nine, third-round grant awards, totaling \$33,393, in support of Northwest Ottawa County and our surrounding communities. This includes a \$4,800 grant to Loutit District Library to revitalize the play area to help children develop skills they need to enter school ready to read and learn.

"The first five years of a child's life are the most crucial for brain development and play is the way young children learn best," said Elizabeth Griffin, Youth Librarian at Loutit District Library. "We are excited for the early literacy family play area at Loutit District Library to become a destination in our community, a place for families to gather, play, and learn together."

The space will include a dramatic play area with a play kitchen; a construction area with Duplos and light table; a writing station; a theater area; a puzzle and game area; and an area for babies. The library has identified a community need for a free educational space that has convenient hours for working parents, therefore this space will be available any time the library is open.

Over the past year or so, YAC has shifted its grant priorities to better align with the needs of youth in our community. "After spending time reviewing the most current data from the Youth Assessment Survey, our YAC members have decided to focus their efforts not only on youth empowerment, but on mental and emotional well-being, physical well-being, and community and cultural well-being," said Lauren Grevel, Education & Youth Initiatives Officer at the GHACF. "This means YAC is focusing on programs and projects that promote inclusivity and self-

efficacy in our community's youth. They recognize the importance of looking holistically at the issues that youth face and want to support the various ways for-impact organizations and programs can work to address these issues."

Other grants include:

**Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Lakeshore** – \$2,668 for the Peacemakers Class, a 12-session karate class for Bigs and their Littles. The curriculum will focus on emphasizing flexibility, self-confidence, respect, self-defense, and physical fitness. Program benefits include stress reduction, core strength, range of motion, increase in mental clarity, and building a sense of community.

**Camp Pentalouan** – \$4,500 for the Campership Program, which provides summer camp opportunities for youth, specifically from Ottawa County. The campership program would provide a one-week overnight camp experience for children from our community who are in need of financial assistance, with a goal of reaching 10 children.

**Grand Haven Area Public Schools** – \$2,800 for the Therapy Dog Program, which will provide individual and intensive training for a therapy dog at Rosy Mound Elementary School. Research shows that therapy dogs increase positive social attention from others and promote the stimulation of social behavior, promote increased trust and trustworthiness among students, reduce aggression, reduce depression, and promote positive moods among students.

**Ottawa Area Intermediate School District** – \$4,500 for a Book Bike, which will be used to target Ottawa County neighborhoods where children might have the least access to reading materials in the summer months. The bike will feature books focused on empathy, cultural understanding, and open mindedness. These books will be given to children and families free of charge throughout the summer.

**Ronald McDonald House of Western Michigan (RMHWM)** – \$2,375 for the Family Support Program. These funds will cover the cost of an average stay at RMHWM for one family from Northwest Ottawa County.

**Spring Lake Public Schools** – \$750 for Calling All Colors, which provides students with an opportunity to learn more about cultural diversity and to help increase respect and appreciation of diversity throughout the school.

**Village of Spring Lake** – \$1,000 for the Youth Art Project, to create a new mural on the Seven Steps Up building in Spring Lake focusing on art and music and bringing diverse communities together.

**Wetland Watch** – \$10,000 for LEEP, the Lakeshore Environmental Education Program, which is currently in Spring Lake Middle, Spring Lake Intermediate, Lakeshore Middle, White Pines Intermediate, West Michigan Academy for Arts and Academics, Walden Green, and Grand Haven Christian schools.

The next grant application deadline for the Youth Fund is April 1, 2020.

The Grand Haven Area Community Foundation is a public, charitable organization serving the Northwest Ottawa County community since 1971. GHACF is regularly recognized as a top 100 Community Foundation in the nation and is the 8th largest community foundation in the State of Michigan. It encourages philanthropy by individuals, families, corporations, and organizations, and serves as a steward of their charitable funds and legacies. In addition to awarding grants, the Foundation offers technical support to nonprofits, convenes community leaders on issues of importance, and advocates for the nonprofit sector. For more information visit [ghacf.org](http://ghacf.org).

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