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**For Immediate Release**

**MANISTEE COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION  
AWARDS GRANTS TO IMPLEMENT ENVISION MANISTEE COUNTY AND  
MSU SMALL TOWN DESIGN INITIATIVE**

**Manistee, Michigan** – The implementation of a year-long, county-wide visioning process involving over 700 people will continue with 12 grants totaling \$85,000 announced today by the Manistee County Community Foundation. Funding for the 12 projects which have a total cost of over \$262,000 was made possible by grants to the Manistee Community Foundation from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation based in Kalamazoo, Michigan and the Oleson Foundation, based in Traverse City, Michigan.

“This is another important step toward implementing priorities that Manistee County communities said are important to their quality of life and economic well-being,” said Mike Thompson, member and Treasurer of the Community Foundation’s Board of Directors. “All of these grants address priorities that were identified through Envision Manistee County and Michigan State University’s Small Town Design Initiative.”

“Manistee County has deservedly gained our attention and support by using community-driven visioning and goal-setting to chart a course for the future,” said Dr. Gail Imig, Program Director of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. “Rural communities like Manistee County have special challenges as well as opportunities. This effort is resulting in a positive transformation of Manistee County and serves as a working model for other rural communities.”

“The Community Foundation is about enhancing the way we give and improving the way we live in Manistee County,” said Foundation Board member Beth McCarthy. “These grants respond to documented needs and will spread benefits countywide. As a Foundation, we want to encourage giving, whether it is the donation of time or funds, to address needs identified through the community-driven Envision Manistee County process.”

Grants selected for funding included:

***Lights, Camera, Action: Protect the Manistee Rivers' Watershed***

(Student learning about watersheds, water quality testing, water pollution and film production)

Grant Amount: \$5,679

Total Project Cost: \$9,579

Applicant: Kevin Postma, Manistee Area Public Schools

***Portage Lake Watershed Forever Plan – Phase 2 Completion***

(Completion of a DEQ and EPA approved Watershed Plan for Portage Lake)

Grant Amount: \$5,000

Total Project Cost: \$40,000

Applicant: Portage Lake Watershed Forever

***“Envision Filer Township”***

(A community-driven process for guiding land use decisions)

Grant Amount: \$13,500

Total Project Cost: \$27,300

Applicant: Filer Township

***Manistee County Point of Sale Ordinance for Residential Wells and Septic Systems***

(Development of a draft county-wide point-of-sale ordinance)

Grant Amount: \$2,500

Total Project Cost: \$5,000

Applicant: Manistee County, Ad-Hoc Sanitation Committee

***Onekama Guild Thrift Shop Expansion and Enhancement***

(Expansion and upgrades to provide improved capacity and customer service)

Grant Amount: \$9,500

Total Project Cost: \$45,980

Applicant: Onekama Guild

***Pleasant Valley Recreational Program (Arcadia)***

(Recreational facilities for community center)

Grant Amount: \$6,800

Total Project Cost: \$12,300

Applicant: Pleasant Valley Community Center

***Village of Onekama Comprehensive Master Plan***

(A community-driven process for developing a Master Plan for the Village of Onekama)

Grant Amount: \$10,000

Total Project Cost: \$21,250

Applicant: Village of Onekama

***Bear Lake Village Park Development***

(Conversion of vacant Village space into a multi-use visiting area)

Grant Amount: \$13,605

Total Project Cost: \$27,210

Applicant: Vision Bear Lake

***Grebe Park Trailhead (Arcadia)***

(Materials for Grebe Park Pavilion at the foot of Arcadia Dunes)

Grant Amount: \$10,416

Total Project Cost: \$25,000

Applicant: Arcadia Township Parks and Recreation Commission

***Onkama Signage (Small Town Design Initiative)***

(STDI welcome sign demonstration project)

Grant Amount: \$3,000

Total Project Cost: \$18,000

Applicant: Portage Lake Association

***VFW Walsh Champion Tree Memorial***

(Trees for Peace Champion Tree Memorial)

Grant Amount: \$5,000

Total Project Cost: \$40,000

Applicant: VFW Walsh Post

“Like Envision Manistee County, we used a community-driven process to review grant applications and make funding recommendations to the Foundation’s Board,” said Betsy Keson who helped coordinate the grant program that is administered by the Manistee Economic Development Office. “We formed an “Envision Implementation Team,” consisting of volunteers with diverse interests to review and rank all of the 17 grant applications prior to the final funding decision by the Community Foundation's Board of Directors.”

Members of the Envision Implementation Team that reviewed the applications included Manistee high school students Analise Johnson and Anna Veverica; County Commissioner Erv Kowalski; business owner/operator Suzanne Riley; Dick Hitchingham and John Hoch who served as co-chairs for Envision Manistee County Work Groups; and Mike Acton and By Lyon, members of the Board of the Manistee County Community Foundation.

Laura Heintzelman was available through the Manistee Economic Development Office to provide technical assistance to grant applicants.

“The response was heartening,” said Heintzelman. “Some of our successful applicants had never written a grant before. Even while the grants provide an important source of funds for critical projects, the grant process also helped to build new capacity in many of our county’s organizations.”

“We are pleased to receive the grant to help Filer Township bring all interests together to determine how we can ideally position ourselves for the future through master planning and zoning,” said Jim Espvik, Filer Township Supervisor. “We will use this grant to shape the future of the Township, positioning us as a progressive, forward thinking governmental jurisdiction that manages growth and encourages economic development just as we encourage people to consider Filer Township as a great place to live and raise families. We also want to use this as an opportunity to involve adjacent townships and the City of Manistee so that we are not looking at our future in isolation of our neighbors.”

“This grant will have tremendous impact in helping us convert a vision into a reality,” said Shelly Gilbert, Board member of the Pleasant Valley Community Center. “The Community Center is a vital focus for Arcadia’s future. The impact of this grant cannot be understated.”

“The Community Foundation’s grant will go directly toward implementing images created through the Small Town Design Initiative,” said Rick Farfsing of Vision Bear Lake. “Bear Lake is a community on the move and this gives our community a real shot in the arm. The grant will enable us to turn two lots on US 31 into aesthetically pleasing places for people to enjoy, visit and rest.”

The Manistee County Community Foundation’s mission is: ***“Enhancing the way we give. Improving the way we live.”*** The purposes of the Foundation are to serve as a county-wide catalyst for positive change and to encourage individuals and organizations to create endowed funds through charitable giving that respond to County needs. For more information, contact the Foundation at 231-723-7269 or visit its web site at [www.manisteefoundation.org](http://www.manisteefoundation.org).