

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**The Raymond John Wean Foundation supports neighborhood improvement;
Warren, Youngstown groups earn Neighborhood SUCCESS grants**

The teachers, students and parents of the Montessori School of the Mahoning Valley drive by Lynn Avenue Park nearly every day on their way to and from the school.

For months, they had been noticing a disturbing trend: fewer people were using the park. Plus, the park was frequently littered with cigarette butts and empty beer cans

Several parents, neighbors and teachers began talking about what they could do to help. They believed that the park was important to the Brownlee Woods neighborhood and to the school and they approached The Raymond John Wean Foundation with their idea to help improve the park.

The proposal from the Montessori School of the Mahoning Valley for \$4,464 to clean up the park and to help keep it safe and clean was one of about 30 to receive funding in the latest round of Neighborhood SUCCESS, a program of The Raymond John Wean .

Like the Montessori School's plan to improve the park, nearly all projects funded by the Warren-based foundation involve neighborhood residents working to solve their own problems and to improve their communities.

A total of \$82,817 was awarded to 29 different organizations in Warren and Youngstown. Grants range in size from \$500 to \$5,000 and include neighborhood gardening initiatives, summer sports programs, block watch efforts, neighborhood beautification, children's self-esteem programs, emergency food giveaways and health screenings.

The grants were awarded by the Neighborhood SUCCESS Grant Making Committee, made up of residents, who broadly represent the diversity of cultures, thoughts and ideas expressed in the community-at-large. The Foundation is in the process of accepting nominations for associate members who will assume positions on the committee as current members terms expire.

Jennifer Roller, program officer for the Raymond John Wean Foundation, said the latest round of grants, awarded in June, marks the third year that the foundation has funded neighborhood

initiatives intended to help improve the lives of the people of the Mahoning Valley. Since its inception in 2008, Neighborhood SUCCESS has funded 214 groups for nearly \$800,000.

Roller explained that the Neighborhood SUCCESS operates on the fundamental belief that residents are in the best position to identify and then to address their own neighborhood challenges and opportunities. “Working with grassroots groups allows us to support perspectives that might otherwise be overlooked, but once tapped into, can have tremendous impact.” Roller said.

An important goal of the program is for groups to utilize their existing resources – whether financial, human or material. “We encourage groups to collaborate and to leverage resources that already exist in the community,” Roller said.

The Grace A.M.E. Church’s program, “Know Your Numbers,” which received \$3,058 through the Neighborhood SUCCESS, is a prime example of collaboration as well as leveraging of existing resources.

The Warren church operates two free health screenings for community residents who may not have insurance.

Know Your Numbers is a partnership between the Grace A.M.E. Church, the City of Warren Health Department and the Humility of Mary Health Partners.

Cheryl Strother, director of nursing for the Warren Health Department and president of the Nursing Guild at the church, said in its seven years of offering the services, which include high blood pressure, cholesterol and prostate cancer screenings, lives have been saved. She said seven people discovered that they had prostate cancer and were then able to get treatment.

Strother, who is coordinating this year’s health screenings, said countless people in the Mahoning Valley do not have health insurance and, therefore, often fail to discover or address health problems that could be treated, including high blood pressure as well as prostate cancer.

Strother notes this problem is particularly pronounced in the African-American community where many people fail to get health screenings.

Two weeks after the lab work is drawn participants come back to the church for the results and to participate in workshops intended to help them deal with such issues as diabetes and high blood pressure.

This year’s lab screening will be held July 26 at Grace A.M.E. Church in Warren. To register for the screening, please call 330-841-2596.

THE NEXT NEIGHBORHOOD SUCCESS DEADLINE IS SEPTEMBER 15, 2011. FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE THE FOUNDATION WEBSITE AT WWW.RJWEANFDN.ORG OR CALL THE FOUNDATION AT 330.394.3203.

Warren-based projects to receive funding are:

- Community Concerned Citizens II, \$1,350, to provide gardens for low to moderate income residents of Warren.
- Historic Perkins Homestead Neighborhood Association, \$4,302, to revitalize the rose garden at the north entrance of Perkins Park.
- Northwest Neighborhood Association Inc., \$2,685, to support a neighborhood garden to raise food for local shelters and food pantries.
- Red Hawk American Indian Cultural Center, \$3,000, to hold an educational and celebratory event highlighting traditional Native American culture.
- Warren Community PTA, \$5,000, to offer fun days at the city schools to encourage parental involvement.
- Warren Little Panthers, \$1,090, to provide youth team building skills through various recreational opportunities.
- Warren City Schools, Jefferson 3-5 Pod, \$3,550, to improve family involvement and student engagement.
- Warren City Schools, Jefferson PK-2 Pod, \$5,000, to offer adventures beyond the classroom, including field trips, assemblies, project-based learning and family programming.

Youngtown-based organizations to receive funding are:

- Neighbors Collaborating for Community Improvement, \$1,110, to install a sign to identify and instill pride among residents.
- This should not have been on the list – I apologize. Rising Star Baptist Church, \$1,950, to provide food and emergency assistance to families in need.
- South Side Community Garden, \$2,603, to start a community garden that will allow residents the opportunity to grow some of their own food.
- Southside Ministries Inc. Needles Eye Christian Counseling Center, \$1,900, to hold weekly character building sessions for children.
- Treez Please Inc., \$4,620, to bring together residents to replant public spaces and to re-establish the original character of designated Youngstown neighborhoods.
- West Side Citizens Coalition, \$1,756, to strengthen partnership among various west side neighborhood groups and block watches.

- Wick Park Neighborhood Association, \$2,708, to place historic markers on street signs and the four corners of Wick Park.
- Youngstown City Schools Rogers Middle School, \$1,844, to form a math club for students in grades six through eight.
- Ambassadors for Christ, \$2,675, to clean up a former tire dumping area and to plant trees and shrubs.
- Crandall Park North, \$2,966, to increase resident communication through signs, meetings, picnics and neighborhood walks.
- Crandall Park South Neighborhood Group, \$3,490, to beautify a prominent corridor in the neighborhood and to secure several vacant properties at risk for arson or crime.
- Family Connections Program, \$1,470, to plan events and activities for parents of Youngstown After School Alliance parents.
- First Unitarian Church, \$1,560, to reach a larger audience of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered youth in the community by offering workshops and discussing methods for dealing with such issues as bullying in schools and discrimination in the workplace.
- Heart Reach Ministries, \$2,750, to offer a summer and back-to-school mentoring program for youth on the northside of Youngstown.
- Idora Wildcats 4H Club, \$4,561, to plant a community garden and to assist the ill and elderly residents of the Idora Neighborhood with maintaining their yards.
- Immaculate Conception – Sacred Heart Parish, \$4,900, to beautify the neighborhood near the parish.
- Jubilee Gardens Inc., \$1,453, to improve the soil of the public garden.
- Metro Assembly of God, \$5,000, to emphasize neighborhood beautification, life skills training and creative community activities for a team of young people.