

PARK COUNTY
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

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For immediate release

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Community Foundation grants \$500,000 in arts funding

Educational programming and community activities top the list

LIVINGSTON, Mont. – The Park County Community Foundation announced the recipients of \$500,000 in grant funding for local nonprofits and schools engaged in arts education, art festivals, and performing arts. The community foundation's Board of Directors approved the grants based on recommendations and insight from the newly formed Park County Council for the Arts.

Funding is being distributed in four programs areas: Community art week activities, \$128,500; School-based arts programming for grades 3-12 in the Livingston Public School district, \$120,000; Art-focused community gathering spaces, including performance space enhancements in the Gardiner School and at the Shane Center, \$100,000; and the Crazy Mountains Oral History project, a program of the Park County Environmental Council that brings together diverse voices from local communities, including Indigenous perspectives, to create a rich archive of stories that reflect our region's connection to the land and environment, \$51,500.

One of the school-based programs will take place at East Side Elementary, under the leadership of Principal Leah Shannon and 5th grade teacher, Megan Brenna.

Ms. Brenna, who was one of four finalists for Montana Teacher of the Year in 2024, clarified that "Livingston's students are growing up in an environment rich with art, without seeing themselves as part of that environment. This program will be transformational for our students by creating a necessary bridge to our local art sector and supporting our students to participate in Livingston's rich artistic heritage through formal art instruction, walking field trips to downtown art galleries, and participation in a community art show."

The Boston-based JAKET Foundation partnered with the Park County Community Foundation by providing funding to create a county-wide arts needs assessment, establish a local arts council of area experts to drive a coordinated vision for the arts in Park County, and advance Park County's arts culture through transformational grantmaking.

"We are extremely grateful to the JAKET Foundation for enabling us to make transformative, multi-year grants that support arts education for youth and public art festival events," said Gavin Clark, executive director at the Park County Community Foundation. "Our doors are always open to folks interested in investing their charitable dollars locally and in alignment with their philanthropic goals and needs in our community."

The PCCF Board of Directors also funded an additional grant of \$100,000 spread over three years to support the ongoing growth of the Park County Council for the Arts, a 13-member volunteer council whose mission is to support the arts and guide the vision for a vibrant and inclusive arts culture throughout Park County. In this initial phase, the Council for the Arts will be hosted as a sponsored project of the Livingston Center for Art and Culture.

"In our 25 years of existence as a local arts nonprofit, we have seen the ongoing need for a unifying organization to support arts in our community," explains Robin Hoggan Ebinger, member of the council and founding board member of the Livingston Center for Art and Culture, "and we agree with the council's vision to improve the well-being of communities throughout the county by positioning the arts as an integral part of Park County's natural beauty, heritage, and economic opportunities. We're enthusiastic about serving as the fiscal sponsor for this emerging organization because we feel confident in their potential to serve as a central hub for coordination and advocacy."

Park County has a long history of being a hub for Montana's arts culture. The Park County Community Foundation's 2023 We Will Park County report notes that one in five survey respondents indicated that arts and culture is one of the top three things they like most about living in Park County, with 58% expressing interest in additional arts and cultural opportunities. Park County scored in the top 3% in the nation for rural arts vibrancy, with the arts sector being well-documented as an economic driver: the Montana Arts Council reports that the creative industries are the sixth largest industry in Montana, contributing \$2.2 billion to the state economy in 2022.

The Park County Community Foundation funded a total of nine programs of the twenty applications received with a total requested of nearly \$2.3 million. A complete list of recipients can be found on the PCCF website at <https://find.pccf-montana.org/Support-the-arts>.

Emerging Issues are one of PCCF's four programs. The community foundation has a unique ability to respond to emergent issues and convene people to address them. Creating the arts council is one example, in addition to disaster response, housing and affordability, childcare shortage, and fiscal sponsorships.

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About PCCF:

For the love of Park County, we inspire investment and leadership to cultivate resilient communities. As Park County grows, PCCF will be a trusted and self-sustaining leader by increasing our ability to foster meaningful philanthropy and community collaboration while honoring our heritage and uniqueness of place.