



Grants to make communities livable for people of all ages
aarp.org/CommunityChallenge

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AARP Awards Three Anchorage Organizations with Community Grants as Part of its Successful Nationwide Program

Anchorage, AK—Today, AARP Alaska announced that three Anchorage-area organizations will receive 2021 *Community Challenge* grants – part of the largest group of grantees to date with \$3.2 million awarded among 244 organizations nationwide. Grantees will implement quick-action projects to promote livable communities by improving housing, transportation, public spaces, civic engagement, and connection with family, friends, and neighbors with an emphasis on the needs of the 50-plus. Many of this year’s awards support revitalizing communities adversely impacted by the pandemic and include a focus on diversity, inclusion, and disparities.

Kathleen Summers, a resident of Anchorage’s Horizon House, looks forward to the Folker Park improvements made possible by the Community Challenge Grant awarded to the Anchorage Park Foundation. “I am so appreciative of this grant that will be given [to the Anchorage Park Foundation] because not only have I walked over with another resident, but my whole family has come and has had wonderful times there together.”

“We are incredibly proud to collaborate with these organizations as they work to make immediate improvements in their communities, encourage promising ideas and jumpstart long-term change, especially for those age 50 and over,” shared Teresa Holt, State Director. “Our goal at AARP Alaska is to support the efforts of our communities to be great places for people of all backgrounds, ages and abilities.”

All projects are expected to be completed by November 10, 2021. In Anchorage, Community Challenge Grant recipients include:

Anchorage Park Foundation

The Anchorage Park Foundation, in partnership with Anchorage Parks and Recreation, will install five additional pieces of outdoor music equipment at Folker Park to complete Anchorage’s first intergenerational health and healing park. Folker Park was intentionally designed to support integration into nature near health care facilities and includes wheel-chair accessible 8-foot-wide paved paths, wheel-chair accessible picnic tables, inclusive adult exercise equipment and an accessible nature-themed tot lot in the shape of logs. The park's proximity to the University Medical District gives families and caregivers the opportunity to take a break from hospital visits. The park is across the street from Providence Horizon House, a senior housing complex that offers assisted

living and includes a full-time activities coordinator who has served on Folker Park's community advisory committee. Upon installation of the equipment, the Anchorage Park Foundation envisions all members of the Anchorage community, ranging from Horizon House residents to hospital therapists and musicians, to use the space.

Catholic Social Services

Catholic Social Services' (CSS) project will revitalize an existing courtyard at one of their main office to make community-grown food resources more available. The courtyard is adjacent to St. Francis House, a food pantry serving over 1,000 Anchorage households monthly. The courtyard will provide a space for people working, volunteering, picking up pantry food, or receiving assistance from CSS to enjoy community and eat locally grown foods. CSS will use grant funds to build raised-bed gardens for the courtyard and for a garden at the Brother Francis Shelter Medical Respite Program. Volunteers will assist in constructing, planting, tending, and leading activities around the harvest. Funds will also be used to create a mural on the St. Francis House Food Pantry drive thru building. This mural will focus on resourcefulness and food pantry use as well as demonstrate community support and respect for food pantry clients. Through the help of the Community Challenge Grant, CSS is able to transform an underutilized space into a community garden that offers garden-grown produce to food pantry clients and provides purposeful opportunities for volunteers.

NeighborWorks Alaska

Seeking to integrate Indigenous culture and storytelling in one of Anchorage's most diverse neighborhoods, NeighborWorks Alaska will install eight culturally relevant interpretive signs along the Fish Creek Trail which connects schools, a recreation center, and six neighborhood parks. The historic importance of this trail to both Spenard residents and Indigenous communities will be honored by this project. The grant will allow NeighborWorks Alaska to bring together local artists and culture bearers to create pieces that honor Alaska's indigenous people and the Dena'ina name they have given Fish Creek, "Ch'atanaltsegh."

AARP Alaska asked recipients to describe, in their own words, what the 2021 Community Challenge Grant funding means to them and the community at-large. You can watch the videos they submitted [here](#).

The Community Challenge grant program is part of AARP's nationwide Livable Communities initiative, which supports the efforts of cities, towns, neighborhoods and rural areas to become great places to live for people of all ages. Since 2017, AARP Alaska has awarded 14 grants and \$120,896 through the program to nonprofit organizations and government entities across the state.

View the full list of grantees and their project descriptions at www.aarp.org/communitychallenge and learn more about AARP's livable communities work at www.aarp.org/livable.

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About AARP

AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering people 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With a nationwide presence and nearly 38 million members, AARP strengthens communities and advocates for what matters most to families: health

security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. AARP also produces the nation's largest circulation publications: AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin. To learn more, visit www.aarp.org, www.aarp.org/espanol or follow @AARP, @AARPenEspanol and @AARPadvocates, @AliadosAdelante on social media.