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Community Foundation awards \$450,000

CRYSTAL LAKE – Speakers and attendees of the McHenry County Community Foundation's Grants Gala Celebration discussed the increasing role of philanthropy in a struggling economy Monday morning.

Headlined by a presentation by Terry Mazany, president and chief executive officer of the Chicago Community Trust, the 2012 gala brought together more than 50 McHenry County organizations receiving grants ranging from \$500 to \$19,500.

In all, the foundation received about 120 applications – an increase from past years – from local agencies, with more than \$450,000 awarded. Suzanne Hoban, a member of the organization's board of directors, said those numbers are a testament to the ambition and willingness to help in the community.

"It's also a testament to the incredible needs of the community," Hoban added. "It's no surprise we were only able to fund about half the applications."

Mazany, who recently served as interim CEO of Chicago Public Schools, talked about the importance of philanthropy as public funding becomes less attainable.

"More and more, we're being asked to shoulder larger initiatives," Mazany said.

Spending about an hour in front of a filled banquet room at the Crystal Lake Holiday Inn, Mazany addressed a wide scope of economic and social issues from increasing debt and income disparity to public transportation and obesity rates.

"One of the things that a good community foundation does repeatedly is to assess what are the needs of the community and formulate its plans around that," he said.

Mazany urged community leaders to think collaboratively and draw on each other's resources.

Jennifer Streit, chair of the foundation's board, said Mazany was the right speaker to get people thinking on a more regional level.

She said it's important to look at what other counties are doing and apply some of those principles locally.

"We have to think about the needs that we meet regionally," Streit said. "None of the borders in the Chicagoland region are closed. ... It's good to say, 'What are the best practices in other counties? What do we do well that we can share?'"

As in previous years, the foundation spread its grants among organizations of many sizes and aims, including chapters of Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, Sage YMCA, Habitat for Humanity, Family Alliance, Inc. and Raue Center for the Arts.

Many of the organizations receiving grants also had benefited in previous years. But Streit said the foundation is always looking to facilitate the growth of endeavors they haven't previously backed. The foundation hosts a class on how to apply for their grant each year.

"We work hard every year to do a broad cross section of grants, and those agencies do really wonderful work," Streit said. "We're just really honored to be able to contribute to that through them."

Kris Hall, president of the Woodstock Fine Arts Association, said the \$4,000 in funding her organization is receiving will go toward costs associated with transporting kids to their annual children's program in the fall.

"It means that the really good programs that we're already doing, we can continue to fund them," she said. "We can't have good programs if we can't get the kids there."

Steven and Monica Szalaj, of the Crystal Lake-based community choir Voices In Harmony, said at Monday's event that they're thankful the foundation exists to fund community projects like their own.

Voices In Harmony received \$7,000 this year, which will allow them to put on their annual Sing-Along Messiah at the Raue Center in December.

Steven Szalaj said it's been tougher in this economy for arts organizations to get sponsorships from local businesses. Without funding from the foundation, Voices of Harmony likely would not be able to put on its biggest event of the year.

"It really has meant the world to us," Szalaj said.

Grantees:

Receiving grants at the McHenry County Community Foundation's Grants Gala Celebration Monday were:

Adult & Child Therapy Services - \$8,000
Animal Assistance Programs, Inc. - \$7,500.00
Big Brothers, Big Sisters of McHenry County - \$5,000
Blessing Barn NFP - \$1,000
Boone Creek Watershed Alliance - \$10,000
Boy Scouts of America- Blackhawk Area Council - \$7,000
Canine Companions for Independence - \$3,000
CASA of McHenry County - \$10,000
Challenger Learning Center for Science & Technology - \$9,000
Community Action Agency for McHenry County - \$5,000
Consumer Credit Counseling Service of McHenry County - \$10,000
Encore Music Academy - \$7,500
Environmental Defenders of McHenry County - \$5,000
Faith in Action of McHenry County - \$6,000
Family Alliance, Inc - \$10,000
Free Guitars for Future Stars - \$8,000
Garden Quarter Neighborhood Resource Center - \$5,000
GiGi's Playhouse McHenry - \$4,700
Girl Scouts of Northern Illinois - \$3,490
Girls on the Run of Northwest Illinois - \$7,500
Habitat for Humanity - \$10,000
Harvard Community Unit School District 50 - \$4,000
Hispanic Housing Development Corporation - \$10,000
Hospice Foundation of Northeastern Illinois - \$5,000
Jail Brakers - \$3,500
The Land Conservancy of McHenry County - \$3,500
The Land Conservancy of McHenry County - \$19,500
The Last Chance House - \$12,000
Little Cherubs Pre School - St. Paul Episcopal Church- \$3,000
Main Stay Therapeutic Riding Program - \$7,500
Main Stay Therapeutic Riding Program - \$5,000
Marengo Resource Center - \$1,500
Marengo United Methodist Church - \$10,000
McHenry County Adult Program - \$3669.60
McHenry County Workforce Network - \$13,500
NISRA Foundation - \$8,000
Northern Illinois Food Bank - \$10,000
Northwest Area Arts Council - \$ 3,500
Openlands Project - \$3,000
Options & Advocacy for McHenry County - \$10,000
Pioneer Center for Human Services - \$4,500
Pioneer Center for Human Services - \$5,200
Pioneer Center for Human Services - \$5,300
Pioneer Center for Human Services - \$5,400
Principled Minds - \$2,400
Raue Center for the Arts - \$10,000
Sage YMCA - \$5,000
Senior Services Associates, Inc. - \$10,000
Transitional Living Services - \$8,200
Turning Point, Inc. - \$9,000
Voices in Harmony - \$7,000
Wellness Place - \$5,000
Woodstock Fine Arts Association - \$4,000
Woodstock Fire/Rescue District - \$10,000
Woodstock Police Department - \$5,000
Woodstock Public Library - \$500
Woodstock Public Library - \$2,500

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