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Junior League of Grand Rapids Awards \$10K Grant to Boys & Girls Clubs of Grand Rapids to Support After-School Food Program

Local women's leadership non-profit gives community grant in February

Grand Rapids, Michigan – February 6, 2020 – The Junior League of Grand Rapids announced today that it selected the Boys & Girls Clubs of Grand Rapids Youth Commonwealth to receive the Junior League's \$10,000 Community Catalyst Grant for 2020. The Boys & Girls Clubs of Grand Rapids will use the funds to provide nearly 10,000 snacks and meals for kids who attend the Club after school to receive nutrition programming, opportunities to participate in sports and games, and nutritional instruction through cooking classes and a summer gardening program. The grant money came from all-volunteer fundraising efforts by the Junior League of Grand Rapids, a women's leadership training organization dedicated to improving children's physical health in Grand Rapids.

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Grand Rapids serve youth who come from households whose total income is less than \$25,000 per year. Their programs provide Club members with a safe place to go after school, after-school snacks and meals, steady adult role models, and opportunities to build the life skills and resilience to overcome extraordinary obstacles and barriers in their formative years. These programs help youth build character and wellness, as well as combat the consequences of food insecurity. Research shows a link between food insecurity and risks to children's development, including both physical and mental health. In accepting the grant, Patrick Placzowski, CEO, Boys & Girls Clubs of Grand Rapids Youth Commonwealth, said, "The Junior League's grant will help our organization bridge the gap between government funding and the resources needed to feed all 300 of our Club members for an entire month. We could not be more grateful to be partnering with the Junior League, which understands these complex issues and is willing to invest in children's future potential."

The Junior League of Grand Rapids, now in its 95th year, has 150 active members and hundreds of local alumni. The organization focuses on training women as community and civic leaders in order to improve children's physical health. The group recently awarded \$50,000 to the Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Department to build a state-of-the-art urban play space near Division and Hall SE. This is the Junior League's third play space in five years in areas of the city that need them most. The Junior League also provides ongoing fitness and nutrition programming at Grand Rapids elementary schools, currently at East Leonard Elementary School. In 2019, the Junior League awarded \$10,000 to the YWCA West Central Michigan for a multi-pronged program addressing food insecurity for children and families experiencing homelessness after domestic violence. The Junior League launched a new program in 2019 called JL Delivers, which seeks to bridge the gap for families moving from temporary shelter at the YWCA-Wege Sojourner House to independent housing by delivering free groceries during their first month in their new homes.

"I am so proud of all that the Junior League has accomplished, and this \$10,000 grant to the Boys & Girls Club of Grand Rapids is a great example of our League's commitment to being a force multiplier through strong community partnerships," shared Tessa K. Muir, 95th President of Junior League of Grand Rapids. "We are excited to know that the 10,000 snacks and meals provided through this grant will contribute to the academic, personal, emotional, and physical health and success of all youth attending the Club."

Muir and Placzkowski are confident that the Club's long-term efforts in providing members with physical activity and access to healthy food options will lead to positive outcomes including graduating from high school, resolving conflict, serving the community, and making healthy lifestyle choices into the future. Through community support, today's youth will become tomorrow's leaders.

In addition to the \$10,000 grant to the Boys & Girls Club, the Junior League of Grand Rapids will also make \$2,500 awards to two other local organizations focused on children's physical health. One of the recipients is the GR8 Sports, Great Kids program of the Grand Rapids Student Advancement Foundation, which eliminates the cost for all children in Grand Rapids Public Schools at the elementary and middle school level to participate in up to 15 different organized sports. The second recipient is Girls on the Run of Kent and Muskegon Counties, which works to inspire girls to be joyful, healthy, and confident using a fun, experience-based curriculum which creatively integrates running. The award will subsidize the program registration fees for girls who otherwise wouldn't be able to participate in this life-changing program that provides not only physical activity, but also critical life skills like conflict resolution and intentional decision making.

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About Junior League of Grand Rapids

The Junior League of Grand Rapids is an organization of women committed to promoting volunteerism, developing the potential of women, and improving communities through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. Its purpose is exclusively educational and charitable. www.juniorleaguegr.com

About Boys & Girls Clubs of Grand Rapids Youth Commonwealth

Boys & Girls Clubs of Grand Rapids Youth Commonwealth adheres to a lineup of tested and proven nationally recognized programs that address today's most pressing youth issues, teaching young people the skills they need to succeed in life. <https://bgcgrandrapids.org/>