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Junior League of Grand Rapids Awards \$10K Grant to Mel Trotter Ministries for Outdoor Play Space Renovations

Local women's leadership non-profit gives community grant to support Pathway Home Residents

Grand Rapids, Michigan – October 14, 2020 – The Junior League of Grand Rapids announced today that it is giving a \$10,000 Community Catalyst Grant to Mel Trotter Ministries to assist in renovating its outdoor play space, in the heart of downtown Grand Rapids, for its Pathway Home Family Shelter Program. The grant will help refresh the existing play space for Pathway Home residents, an emergency shelter and rehousing program, and is a collaboration between Mel Trotter Ministries and Family Promise of Grand Rapids. This shelter program is designated for single adults with children and intact families where guests receive meals and access to an outdoor play area, which needs repair.

Together with KABOOM!, The Thomas and Tracy Breihof Fund, and the Junior League of Grand Rapids, a new playground will be erected for use by Pathway Home Residents, as well as children at the nearby Bethlehem Intergenerational Center, supporting children's physical, social, and emotional health through access to safe play. Homelessness was on the rise well before COVID-19 and in the last six months it has significantly accelerated. As shelters like Pathway Home have needed to follow social distancing guidelines and other CDC recommendations to contain the spread of the virus, there have been many unexpected financial demands on the organization and Mel Trotter Ministries had to reallocate funding originally reserved to renovate this vital play space. Due to the Junior League's reputation for thoughtful play space installations and commitment to children in the City of Grand Rapids, this partnership was a natural fit. "We are extremely grateful to The Junior League of Grand Rapids and the others who came together to provide funding to refurbish the outdoor play space for our families in need. Access to safe play is imperative in our guests' restoration journey, and this kind of generosity makes it possible," said Beth Fisher, VP of Advancement and Communication for MTM. The Junior League of Grand Rapids grant money came from volunteer fundraising efforts by its members who are dedicated to improving children's physical health in Grand Rapids.

The Junior League of Grand Rapids, now in its 96th year, has 123 active members and hundreds of local sustaining members. The organization focuses on training women as community and civic leaders through improving children's physical health and wellness. 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.

The renovations at Mel Trotter Ministries mark the Junior League's third play space project in five years. Each project is strategically located in areas of the city to increase access to safe play. The Junior League also provides ongoing health and wellness support to East Leonard Elementary School in the Grand Rapids Public Schools District. In January 2020, the Junior League awarded a grant to the Boys & Girls Club of West Michigan to provide 10,000 snacks and meals for its after-school program. 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 no-cost groceries during their first month in their new homes.

"I am extremely proud of the impact that the Junior League has made in Grand Rapids, and this \$10,000 grant to Mel Trotter Ministries is a great example of where we are able to maximize impact by working with community partners like KABOOM! and the Thomas and Tracy Breihof Fund who also have a passion for supporting the community and improving children's physical health," shared Angie Pope, 96th President of Junior League of Grand Rapids. "COVID-19 continues to cause financial and health pressures for families. We hope the children and families in the Pathway Home Program find joy in using the play space with their family and each other."

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