



Press Release

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AARP Vermont Announces Community Action Grant Winners in Newport

BURLINGTON, VT – Five small organizations with big plans have been selected to receive Community Action Grants from AARP Vermont supporting their efforts to make Newport a more “Age-Friendly” city. In partnering with AARP Vermont, Newport has committed to embrace the changing demographics of an aging population by focusing on safe, walkable streets, better housing and transportation options, access to key services and community engagement opportunities for all ages. These Community Action Grants support that direction by funding small, grassroots organizations that are working to advance the Age Friendly movement.

After a thorough review process, the following projects were selected:

Rural Community Transportation, Sandy Thorpe- \$2,000

Now Playing Newport, Jim McKimm- \$1,000

Newport Dispatch, Bryan Marovich- \$1,500

Newport Jazz Festival, Cynthia More- \$750

Upper Kingdom Food Access, Jane U. Edwards- \$500

Laptop and Computer Project, Marina Brown - \$250

Rural Community Transportation (RCT) is a non-profit transportation service that has been providing public transit in Essex, Caledonia, Orleans, and Lamoille counties for over 25 years. RCT sees the benefits of increasing multi-modal transportation by adding walking and bike routes to their Bus Schedules and Service Guides. This grant will further support RCT’s goal of increasing active transportation by encouraging community members to walk, bike, and ride public transportation with up to date connectivity information. With the help of the AARP grant, RCT will be able to print new Bus Guides that will allow community members to see where they can get off or on to walk or bike designated paths.

Now Playing Newport St. Mark’s Church began the Music/Lunch Program in 2015. Their events have been incredibly successful; creating a community where seniors can meet, interact, and experience the power music has in promoting healthy aging. Thanks to the AARP grant, they will be able to grow this program and provide a larger meal for those who attend. This will allow St.

Marks to increase their attendance from an average of 30 to 50 and still be able to provide everyone with a full meal.

Newport Dispatch has been providing free community news to Orleans County, Vermont for almost three years. Last year they made a shift towards creating and promoting local videos. Their next project is a monthly series of videos that focus on the experiences of older adults living in the community. The piece will feature those who make a difference in their community and provide advice to current younger generations. The AARP grant will help foster this intergenerational connection by supporting the technical needs of this project.

Newport Jazz Festival was created in 2015 to help promote Newport businesses, draw crowds and bolster tourism in Newport. The Jazz festival is an inclusive event for all ages both on stage and in the audience. The grant will help by providing transportation for older adults in the community so they can more easily attend the performances.

Upper Kingdom Food Access is a community initiative started in 2015 to promote healthy outcomes from better eating. To achieve healthier lifestyles and combat food insecurity, the initiative focuses on education to all ages about choices within the food system with a focus on Orleans and northern Essex Counties. The grant has provided the funding to create The Upper Kingdom Food Resource Directory which will increase access to food for those in need. The directory will provide a centralized source of where and how to better connect and access a wide variety of local food resources for both those in need and those providing service.

The Laptop and Computer Project is a grassroots initiative spearheaded by Marina Brown to increase and enhance access to technology information for low income elders. The project places user friendly computers with lightweight computer operating systems that have been rehabbed into the hands of low income elders to increase communication and lessen isolation. With the help of the AARP grant, the Laptop and Computer Project will be able to provide five seniors with computers and access to information.

AARP Vermont officials and community representatives conducted the selection process and AARP is partnering with the Newport City Renaissance Corp. to administer the grants.

“We are very pleased to extend support to these projects as a way to foster local community development initiatives in Newport,” said Greg Marchildon, state director at AARP Vermont. “We received a broad range of proposals to consider this year and we hope these modest grants will inspire and support dedicated grassroots groups that have a vision for Newport as an Age Friendly city and how it can be enhanced. We are committed to working with our partners and officials in Newport as they develop future plans and we expect to continue this program going forward.”

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization with 125,000 members in Vermont and 40 million members nationally. Through a wide array of special benefits, services, and information resources, we help our members make important choices, reach their goals and dreams, and make the most of life after 50.

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