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Organizations' projects "Innovate for Good"

Rose Community Foundation awards efforts in sustainability, health, culture

By Diane Amdur
YourHub Contributor

Nine local organizations promoting education, sustainability, health, culture, food and justice in the community have been named winners of Rose Community Foundation's inaugural Innovate for Good.

The foundation created Innovate for Good in 2015, a venture to find and fund new, innovative projects "to make the greater Denver community a better place to live." There were nearly 400 submissions in response to the question, "What new and innovative idea would you bring to life to make the greater Denver community a better place to live?"

In June 2015, a team of 130 community members helped select the nine organizations as winners. A total of \$250,000 was awarded to fund their projects.

"These nine organizations embody the heart of why this initiative was originally created, to find people with ideas for innovative and inspiring work, then encourage them to implement their vision," said Sheila Bugdanowitz, president and CEO of Rose Community Foundation.

The following is background on the winning Innovate for Good projects and their progress since June 2015:

- **"Workshop on Wheels" (by Be the Gift)** is a workshop truck outfitted with tools and materials volunteers need to complete home repair projects for single-mom families. Since receiving the grant, Be the Gift has built three workshops to serve more single-mom families in the Denver area.

- **"The Stompin' Ground Games" (by Warm Cookies of the Revolution)** is a

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Greenway Foundation educator Kate Ronan, right, and Annalena Tylicki's in the South Platte River during a day camp at Johnson-Habitat Park on June 9, 2015. The foundation's Clean River Design Challenge won an Innovate for Good award. Andy Cross, Denver Post file

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monthly, year-long Olympics-style competition between Denver neighborhoods, where arts, culture and history are combined in the name of civic pride and engagement. Since receiving the grant, the entire project has accelerated its participation and attendance.

- **“Fresh Food Connect” (by Groundwork Denver)** is an app to help feed families, reduce food waste and provide income to low-income youth by allowing home gardeners to donate extra produce for distribution at food banks and through affordable sale. Since receiving the grant, the app has connected gardeners to youth who will be employed to pick up and deliver donated produce, using bikes and trailers. In May, they will complete a second version of the app for backyard gardeners.

- **“Clean River Design Challenge” (by the Greenway Foundation)** is a design competition for students attending Metro State University of Denver, to create a mechanism to remove trash from the South Platte River. Since receiving the grant in June 2015, the foundation has been able to launch the inaugural competition with 10 competitors from MSU Denver.

- **“Race, Policing and Community Justice Advocates” (by Shorter Community AME Church)** engages high school students in becoming peer presenters in racial equality, community-based policing and justice-advocacy work. Since receiving the grant, this project provided community leaders, law enforcement officers and community organizations the opportunity to hear from student advocates regarding race, policing and justice issues.

- **“Shakespeare in the Parking Lot” (by Denver Center for the Performing Arts),** a “food truck for

the arts,” provides affordable theatrical performances to high school students in school parking lots followed by actor-led workshops to support classroom teaching and learning. Since receiving the grant, 12 schools have enjoyed this programming at no cost to the school.

- **“Veterans in Food Deserts” (by Denver Botanic Gardens)** helps military veterans grow and sell fresh produce and share knowledge about planting, harvesting and nutrition through farm stands in neighborhoods with limited access to healthy foods. Since receiving the grant, Veterans Farm Program created more programs for veterans, including vocational opportunities in farming, community engagement, relationships with other service members and financial compensation for participation.

- **“Creative Youth Take Flight — La Alma Connection” (by Arts Street)** helps underserved youth learn about urban design, “creative-place” making and economic devel-

opment by producing a master art plan and public art series to encourage pedestrian use of the light rail and 10th Avenue in the La Alma neighborhood. Since receiving the grant, these classes have cultivated skills and confidence in neighborhood youth in building a community through art.

- **“Bright by Text” (by Bright by Three)** is an educational text-messaging system that sends parents evidence-based tips to support the development of very young children. Since receiving the grant, they have expanded and now provide parents with localized community resources and information.

On May 2, Rose Community Foundation will begin accepting idea submissions for Innovate for Good 2016. Visit rcfdenver.org/innovateforgood for more information. Submission deadline is May 31.

Diane Amdur lives in Evergreen, where she runs Amdur Communications.