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Contact: Jim Flaherty, Communications Director

Office 608/ 286-6308 – Cell 608/ 698-0928, jflaherty@aarpp.org

Plan to offer free outdoor movies in Juneau park wins AARP Wisconsin Small Dollar, Big Impact grant

JUNEAU, WI – A proposal by the Juneau Parks and Recreation Department to host outdoor movies in Juneau City Park as a way of bringing the community together and giving citizens a free fun family activity has been selected to receive an AARP Wisconsin “Small Dollar, Big Impact” grant.

These grants are awarded once a month throughout the year to projects across Wisconsin that are designed to improve communities and make them better places for everyone to live, work and play as they age. Judges selected this project for a \$1,000 grant after reviewing dozens of proposals submitted from all over the state.

Shamus O’Reilly, Director of the City of Juneau Parks and Recreation Department, said the funds will help offset the startup costs of hosting outdoor movies, including obtaining the necessary equipment to get the program running and keep it free for the residents of Juneau and surrounding areas.

As noted in the grant application, O’Reilly said the department places great importance on offering accessible entertainment for all. This particular proposal was created in response to feedback the department received from citizens who said they would like to see more family events, he said.

O’Reilly said his department strives to create programs that enhance the Juneau community. “My philosophy is a program for every person and a person in every program. To create this environment, we are always looking for new opportunities to better serve our community by offering amenities and programs that give added value to the lives of the citizens of Juneau.

“Our project is unique in that there is nothing like this in the immediate area of Juneau, as well as that it will be a collaboration with several other city departments. It will give the families of Juneau the opportunity to do something together, which is desperately needed in our area, as well as getting people outside,” O’Reilly said.

The “Movies in the Park” project fits perfectly with the spirit and intent of the grant program, said AARP Wisconsin State Director Sam Wilson. “Our goal is to support communities as they make positive changes that inspire long-term progress on livable issues. This project hits that nail right on the head.”

O’Reilly said the city was thrilled to learn they had received the grant. “When I saw that we had received the Small Dollar, Big Impact grant I was very excited as this will greatly help the program to get off the ground. This program is just the beginning of our plan to grow the strength of our community by offering programs to bring the community together,” he said.

AARP Wisconsin’s launched its “Small Dollar, Big Impact” grant program in 2020 and is now in its second year of helping proposed projects move forward in rural and urban parts of the state. All projects must be completed within 60 days from winner announcement.

“These grants are exactly what the name describes – short-term, low-cost solutions that could have remarkable impacts on the shaping of neighborhoods and cities,” said Darrin Wasniewski, Associate State Director of Community Outreach for AARP Wisconsin.

“There are so many great ideas and proposals for making life better in communities across Wisconsin. We know how impactful \$1,000 can be. This is our way of extending some seed money to get these projects off the ground.”

The grant program is open to some nonprofits and government entities. For more information on the program, visit www.aarp.org/WIsdbi

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