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Arma Community Garden wins \$5K in 'Gardens For Good' contest

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Jonathan Riley, Morning Sun

PITTSBURG, Kan. — Thanks to an outpouring of support in the form of votes in a recent online grant competition, Arma Community Garden now has an additional \$5,000 to spend after being announced as one of the contest's winners this week.

"We applied on behalf of the Arma City Library for the Arma Community Garden to be entered into the annual Gardens For Good grant contest, which is sponsored by Nature's Path Organic, a company out of Canada," said Matt O'Malley, director of outreach and development for the group Live Well Crawford County.

More than 350 applications were submitted for gardens across North America, according to a press release from Nature's Path announcing the winners. The 21 top gardens were originally set to receive \$5,000 each.

"With so many deserving applicants and amazing stories about local community garden impacts, it was so hard to choose only 21 gardens to receive our grants, which is why we added an extra at the last minute!" Jyoti Stephens, vice president of mission and strategy at Nature's Path, said in the release.

"The overwhelming response to this year's Gardens For Good program shows us that — amidst a time when access to nutritious foods became a critical challenge due to the pandemic — local communities have rallied together to support each other. It is truly heartwarming."

O'Malley noted that among the hundreds of applicants, and many of the winners, were gardens located in major metropolitan areas, where they would be more likely to have much larger networks of supporters.

"So we knew we kind of had a task ahead of us, being that Arma is a community of 1,400," he said. "We finished in 11th place with 765 votes in an international competition. I've been smiling for weeks about this. Most of the top 21 finishers were from huge metro areas with really large, well-established community gardens that are housed by like big organizations."

The next step, O'Malley said, is deciding how to use the money, which will be up to the Arma Nutrition Council. Initial ideas include more benches, apple and pear trees, raised beds for berries and asparagus, and a trellis in front of the garden shed for flowers to climb.

"We're still sort of flirting with the idea of how do we make handicap-accessible raised beds happen," O'Malley said.

Other ideas include setting money aside for general operating costs over several years, he said, and continuing to pay lead garden volunteers small stipends to lead Saturday work groups.

This article originally appeared on Morning Sun: [Arma Community Garden wins \\$5K in 'Gardens For Good' contest](#)