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BMO Trust and Custody Services announces Pritchett grant recipients

Awardees honored Thursday during special ceremony



Frances Mitchelson, Pritchett Trust Grant Committee Chairman, names this year's grant recipients. Each recipient was given 15 to 20 seconds to briefly explain what the funds are for.

DUSTIN R. STRONG / THE MORNING SUN



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By Dustin R. Strong / dstrong@morningeun.net

PITTSBURG, Kan. — On Thursday, BMO Trust and Custody Services announced this year's recipients of the Pritchett Trust grants. More than \$650,000 in grants will be distributed to organizations in Southeast Kansas, the majority of which operate in Crawford County.

The Trust was established in 1994 after the deaths of long-time Pittsburg residents, William B. Pritchett, a veteran of World War I, and Athlyn C. Pritchett. Soon after their marriage in 1920, they opened the Pritchett Insurance Agency in Pittsburg. In the 1930s and 1940s, they invested in oil and gas leases in Kansas and Oklahoma, becoming successful in both businesses.

"The Pritchett Trust committee is proud to honor the legacy of Mr. and Mrs. Pritchett by awarding these worthwhile grants to 44 worthy non-profit organizations, schools and municipalities," said Frances Mitchelson, Pritchett Trust Grant Committee chairman and advisory board member.

Other members of the Pritchett grant selection process include BMO's Pittsburg Advisory Board of Directors: Rick Baden, Ron Marrone, Ray Ryan, Dr. Ron Seglie, and Vince VanBeelaere.

This year's Pritchett Trust grant recipients included Ascension Via Christi Hospital, Boy Scouts of America Ozark Trails Council, Cato School, Children's Advocacy Center, City of Pittsburg Parks & Recreation/Kiwanis Club, Crawford County Historical Museum, Dream Big Little One Association, Fostering Connections, Girard Medical Center Foundation, Kansas Big Brothers Big Sisters, Live Well Crawford County, McCune Lions Club, McCune Town & Country Center, and Miners Hall Museum.

Other 2022 recipients included Pittsburg Community Child Care Learning Center, Inc., Pittsburg State University, Quilts of Valor Foundation, Restorative Justice Authority of Crawford County, Sacred Heart Community Food Pantry, Salvation Army, SEK Interlocal #837, USD #247 Southeast High School, USD #248 Girard, USD #249 Frontenac, USD #250 Pittsburg, Special Olympics Kansas, St. Mary's Colgan Catholic Schools, The Family Resource Center, Inc. (The Center), Victory Life Sunshine Child Care, and Wesley House.

Since its inception in 1995, the Trust has awarded a total of more than \$11 million to organizations in Southeast Kansas and Crawford County. These funds have helped individuals in the area in innumerable ways, from educating the public through local museums, rebuilding a town devastated by a tornado, to encouraging people to live a healthy, active lifestyle and providing comfort to area veterans.

One grant, half of which was distributed last year and half this year, helped to make improvements to two of the key attractions at the Crawford County Historical Museum that were in desperate need of repair and at risk of being lost.

"Replacing the roof and restoring the siding on Mr. Brown's Grocery Store and the Green Elm one-room school house would not have been possible without the Pritchett grant," Amanda Minton, the museum's director, said. "We are so thankful and blessed to have such wonderful people that continue to enrich the endeavors of our community today."

Phyllis Bitner, who is treasurer and a trustee of Miners Hall Museum in Franklin, said the museum is grateful to the Pritchett Foundation for recognizing the importance of the museum's mission, a sentiment that was also echoed by another trustee, Ron Pommier, who is also collections manager for Miners Hall.

"This Pritchett Grant will allow Miners Hall Museum the opportunity to purchase archival storage for our vintage photographs and paper documents that are such an irreplaceable asset to the documentation of the story of the people who came to our area to make a better life for their families," Pommier said.

But beyond that, Bitner said the Pritchett Foundation played a vital role in rebuilding the community of Franklin after the devastating tornado of 2003. "They have helped us provide a community park which is used by residents of the entire region and have assisted the museum with creating a facility, exhibits and programming throughout the years," she said. "Our 'community' extends far beyond the borders of Franklin, Kansas."

Brad Stroud, executive director of Live Well Crawford County, said the organization is extremely excited and thankful to be a recipient of a 2022 Pritchett Trust grant. Live Well is receiving \$17,000 this year.

"The Pritchett Trust provides so many opportunities to our community to build and improve upon the places that we work, live, and play," Stroud said.

According to Stroud, Live Well will be partnering with the Pittsburg Parks and Recreation Department on a project that will bring adult workout equipment to Lakeside Park. "We are excited to work with the City of Pittsburg to provide another opportunity for our residents to be physically active and healthy," Stroud said.