

Highlands Cashiers Health Foundation awards grants for local nonprofits



Submitted photo

2020 has been a busy year for the Highlands Cashiers Health Foundation, with a number of projects impacting the public health needs of the community. The foundation provided these hand sanitizer stations to local businesses this summer, and has remained active in combating the spread of COVID-19 through testing in the schools and, most recently, a new round of grants to local nonprofits.

Living up to its stated intention of improving the health and wellbeing of Highlands, Cashiers and the surrounding communities, Highlands Cashiers Health Foundation has awarded more than \$1 million toward grants and special projects in 2020.

“This has been an unprecedented year for everyone,” said HCHF Board Chairman Dr. Walter Clark. “In late March, our Board refocused their 2020 priorities to meet the new community needs that arose from COVID-19.”

Since then, HCHF has been in full swing addressing COVID-19 projects such as funding the distribution of 250 hand sanitizing stations in partnership with four Chambers of Commerce, sponsoring community COVID-19 drive through testing sites in Cashiers and Highlands, and funding COVID-19 weekly testing in three local schools.

“We want to put our dollars where the needs are greatest, and where needle-moving projects make a real difference,” Dr. Clark said. “Once we addressed critical COVID-19 projects our Programs & Grants Committee went into action.”

Led by Stephanie Edwards, the HCHF Programs and Grants Committee proceeded with the original strategic priorities for 2020 grants: 1) Health and Access to Healthcare, 2) Education, and 3) Transformative and Collaborative Solutions.

“Our grant cycle took a little longer this year, but I am thankful to our committee for persevering through a judicious process to make a meaningful difference in people’s lives,” Edwards said.

Twenty grant awards (19 confirmed and 1 pending) totaling nearly a million dollars were approved by the HCHF Board in October.

“These awarded funds will touch lives spanning from early childhood through end-of-life and support non-profit services that uplift and improve lives,” said Edwards.

Fifty-five percent of HCHF’s 2020 grants will support health projects such as school-based health, dental care and behavioral health services for the underserved; nearly 20 percent will fund childhood education programs and the remaining funds went toward transformative solutions to some of our areas most pressing issues.

Director Linda Quick said, “While transformative is a difficult concept to define, we were impressed by programs that inspire and lead people to learn and

thrive. Our goal is to improve health and well-being by partnering with organizations that make a lasting, impactful difference.”

In addition to COVID-19 projects, and grant-funding the Foundation unveiled its “Leap of Faith” initiative to open a new community health center operated by Blue Ridge Health incorporating a Rural Teaching Practice ran by Mountain Area Health Education Center and the UNC School of Medicine. HCHF invites donors and funding partners to support this project to ensure access to quality healthcare for our community and to create a pipeline to increase rural physician recruitment to our area.

“If all goes as planned, we expect to see an opening date by summer 2021,” said Dr. Clark.

Since its founding 21 months ago on February 1, 2019, HCHF has invested more than \$3.6 million dollars across six counties through 73 grants to non-profit organizations and special projects. The past year has been particularly challenging, Dr. Clark said, resulting in an increased need from these community organizations.

“2020 has been a year of unexpected need. The Foundation and Board of Directors have done a tremendous job by listening to and meeting the increased needs of our community. I am honored to serve alongside fellow Board Members and dedicated Community Advisors. We all look forward to continuing this momentum and building upon our purpose creating lasting impact for generations to come,” Dr. Clark said.

With this round of grants approved, the foundation is already looking forward to next year’s projects.

“The Foundation looks forward to another tremendously impactful year in 2021, as we continue to move the needle forward for improving health and well-being throughout Highlands, Cashiers, and the surrounding communities,” said Robin Tindall, CEO and Executive Director of the Highlands Cashiers Health Foundation.

Approved Organizations

- Advance Highlands Education Committee
- The Bascom: A Center for the Visual Arts
- Blue Ridge Free Dental Clinic
- Blue Ridge School Education Foundation
- Cashiers Valley Preschool
- Cherokee Indian Hospital Authority
- Circles Cashiers-Glenville

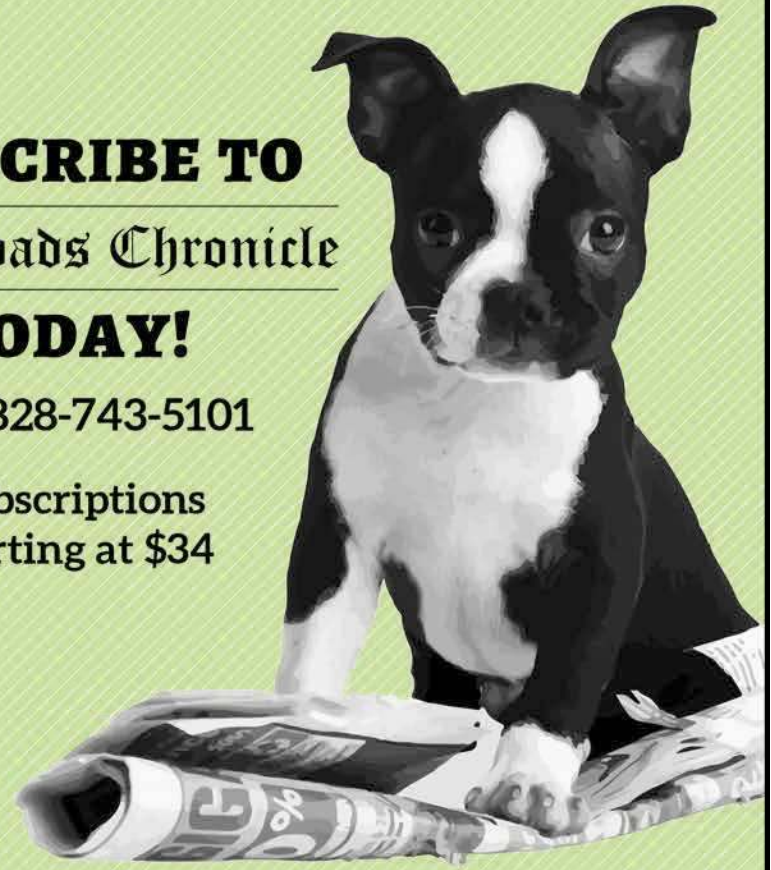
- Fishes & Loaves Food Pantry, Inc.
- Friends of The Albert Carlton - Cashiers Community Library
- Macon Program for Progress
- Giving Spoon, Inc.
- Hampton Preschool and Early Learning Center
- Highlands Biological Foundation, Inc.
- Highlands Community Child Development Center
- HIGHTS, Inc.
- Hospice House Foundation of WNC, Inc.
- Macon County Care Network
- Pisgah Legal Services
- The Summit Charter School, Inc.
- Vecinos Farmworker Health Program

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