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SEVEN KALKASKA COUNTY BUSINESSES AWARDED REGIONAL RESILIENCY PROGRAM GRANTS

Partnership Between Venture North, Kalkaska Economic Development Corporation and Kalkaska DDA

KALKASKA, MICHIGAN – Seven small businesses in Kalkaska County on the road to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic have received Regional Resiliency Program grants totaling \$33,000. Six of the seven awardees were women-owned businesses. Grant applications were received from 18 small businesses with nine or fewer employees that requested a total of \$89,500, nearly three times the amount available. The program was funded through awards of \$10,000 from the Kalkaska County Economic Development Corporation (EDC), \$3,000 from the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation and \$20,000 from Venture North Funding and Development.

The Consumers Energy Foundation jump-started the 2021 program with an award of \$200,000 to Venture North, just as they did in 2020 when the program was created. Venture North expects 200 or more grants of up to \$5,000 each will be allocated by July 2021 to small businesses in the ten-county region. Over \$500,000 has been secured in awards through philanthropic giving in 2021, similar to the total amount gifted in 2020.

“The Regional Resiliency Program (RRP) has been a testimonial to the value of a bottoms up process with good partners who have a lead role in determining where grants go in their communities,” said Laura Galbraith, President of Venture North. “In addition to the contribution of funds by the EDC that were converted into grants for businesses, the EDC and DDA promoted the availability of grants to small businesses, organized a team to review each application and provided funding recommendations which we followed in our grant awards.”

“We appreciate the partnership as well,” said Cash Cook, Director of the Village of Kalkaska Downtown Development Authority. “We helped several businesses that needed support because of the pandemic and used the process to foster education and awareness of Venture North that develops creative solutions to support business growth. It’s our job to connect our business community with all resources available to respond to their unique situations. Venture North is often an ideal organization to contact first.”

“Kalkaska County is a high priority for Venture North,” Galbraith said. “We need to spend more time in the County once many of the COVID-19 restrictions are lifted on July 1. We want to understand community priorities and challenges and dedicate resources to help businesses that align with their visions and goals for the future. We are often able to be flexible with terms and conditions and welcome opportunities to partner with other lending institutions.”

Galbraith and Cook said that businesses not receiving a grant requested funding for various expenses including: wages, safety equipment, social media, communications, inventory, debt reduction, web site development, supplies, rent and utility payments, and hiring and retaining staff. “We invite all businesses to contact us to find out about programs and organizations that may be of help,” Galbraith said. “There will be more dollars and programs coming to Northwest Michigan and we will do everything we can to respond to the special needs and opportunities of the business community.”

Venture North’s core business is lending of capital to entrepreneurs and small businesses planning to start a business or grow an existing business and provide job opportunities to benefit communities in Northwest Michigan. Loans are often in partnership with other local banks or credit unions where Venture North’s ability to offer special terms in a subordinate position makes the difference in capital available to grow and strengthen businesses.

“We pride ourselves on being flexible and creative in figuring out how to financially help small business which are the economic back-bone of our rural communities,” said Galbraith. “And that includes relatively small loans which other lending institutions often find too expensive to handle. If you are a sound business and need support, let us know how we can help. We look forward to playing an instrumental role in supporting businesses that are vital to the betterment of Kalkaska County. Information about Venture North and all the programs we offer can be accessed at venturenorthfunding.org.”

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Kalkaska County businesses receiving grants included:

- Advanced Office Supply and Printing, Kalkaska
- From Head to Toe, Kalkaska
- Our Family Tradition, Kalkaska
- Quirky Crate, Kalkaska
- Small Town Girls Creative Studio, Kalkaska
- Sweet Shannon’s, Kalkaska
- Uptown Hair Care with Brandy Ball, Kalkaska

