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Unity Foundation gives grants to local groups

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La PORTE - On Tuesday afternoon, the Unity Foundation of La Porte County donated more than \$100,000 in grants to many local organizations at their annual luncheon.

They hosted community leaders and organizations at the "Building Bridges To Our Future" luncheon, which Unity President Maggi Spartz said represented the foundation's purpose to give to groups that help the future of the county.

Unity accumulated about \$900,000 this year to give to grants, scholarships and non-profit technical assistance.

Some of the projects that Unity is working on includes an art space, housing the homeless and education for public and parochial schools. They also helped with the Rumely Allis-Chalmers Museum.

Another project the group is helping is the Love Our Lakes Project on 1010 Pine Lake Ave. which will have a recreational spot for visitors.

Their goal next year is to acquire \$1.2 million. During their promotion last year called "Friends Helping Friends Give Day," Unity raised \$168,000 in 39 hours. The next promotion day will be called "Give Local Awareness" which is a celebration of the national organization's 100th anniversary on May 6, 2014.

There were two presentations at the luncheon. The first was by Dot Kesling of the Lindsey O'Brien Kesling Wishing Tree Foundation. Kesling's daughter Lindsey, 22, a La Porte native, went to sleep in her Scottsdale, Ariz., apartment in November 2010 and passed away from carbon monoxide poisoning. Her mother then started the organization to prevent future deaths from carbon monoxide with the help of Unity.

"We were encouraged to seek help from Unity when we were still numb to what happened," said Kesling. "We've been established for three years and Unity has been amazing partners. It is a small global village."

She said Lindsey was very involved in the arts and the Wishing Tree has donated to places including the Michigan City Lubeznik Center for the Arts where they now have a photography class and will have a dance class for underprivileged students.

The second presentation came from Rick Soria and Jack Schoenfelder of the Ivy Tech Community



Giving presentations on the importance of the Unity Foundation were, from left, Jack Schoenfelder, Ivy Tech Community College Pejic Campus; Dot Kesling, Lindsey O'Brien Kesling Wishing Tree Foundation; Maggi Spartz, Unity Foundation of La Porte County; and Jack Soria, Ivy Tech Community College Pejic Campus. Photo by Gabrielle Gonzalez

College Pejic Campus in Michigan City.

"Our story begins 50 years ago," said Soria to the audience. "We are your community college. And many of these students are working for you."

Schoenfelder spoke about two occurrences where the students overcame significant difficulties.

"You guys are doing a great job and we thank you for all the things you do for La Porte County," said Unity Foundation member Jim Jessup who announced each grant given at the end of the luncheon.

For more information about the Unity Foundation visit www.uflc.net or call (219) 879-0327.

2013 Unity Foundation grants

- Two for the American Red Cross La Porte County Chapter
- Boy Scouts of America, LaSalle Council
- Boys & Girls Club of Michigan City
- Two for Catholic Charities Diocese of Gary
- Citizens Concerned for the Homeless
- Three for Dunebrook
- Eta Eta Chapter of Psi Iota Xi
- Garner Foundation
- Hailmann Elementary School
- Harmony House/CASA of La Porte County
- Heathlinc
- Healthy Communities of La Porte County
- Independent Cat Society
- Ivy Tech Foundation
- Junior Achievement of La Porte County
- La Porte County Habitat for Humanity
- Two for La Porte County Meals on Wheels
- La Porte County YMCA
- La Porte YMCA Child Care and Learning Center
- Leadership LA Porte County
- Lubeznik Center for the Arts
- MCAS Hours for Ours
- Michiana Marine Detachment #1348
- Michigan City Area School
- Michigan City High School

- New Prairie Middle School
- Open Door Adolescent Health Center
- Open Door Community Alliance
- Two for Parents and Friends
- Reins of Life
- Respite House
- Safe Harbor Nurturing Minds
- Salvation Army-La Porte
- Four for Salvation Army-Michigan City
- Two for Samaritan Counseling Centers
- Stepping Stone Shelter for Women
- Supplemental United Pantry
- Trinity Community Food Pantry
- United Way of La Porte County
- Westville-New Durham Township Public Library
- Worthy Recovery
- Two for Youth Service Bureau of La Porte County

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