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CONTACT:

James Seaton

212-784-5705

JSeaton@groupgordon.com

Seniors Community Revitalization & Development Fund Awards \$350,000 to Organizations Serving Seniors in Eastern Missouri and Southern Illinois

The St. Louis Regional Health Commission in partnership with Deaconess Foundation partnered to invest in transportation, safety, and health navigation support for seniors

ST. LOUIS (Dec. 12, 2023) – The board of the Seniors Community Revitalization & Development Fund (Seniors Community Fund) today announced \$350,000 in grant awards to support services for seniors in six Missouri counties and three Illinois counties. Launched by [The St. Louis Regional Health Commission](#) (the RHC), in partnership with [Deaconess Foundation](#), the Fund aims to improve the public health system infrastructure to better serve residents 55 years of age and older and promote transparency and accountability. The Fund’s community-led Seniors Advisory Board selected 14 grant recipients with a focus on the Fund’s three priority areas: transportation, safety, and health navigation support for seniors.

“As a senior myself, I understand firsthand the importance of the Seniors Community Fund and how it empowers us to shape our own future,” said Rosetta Keeton, Patient Advisory Consultant at the RHC and Seniors Advisory Board member. “In giving seniors and those who work with us decision-making power, the Fund allows us to create conditions in which we may live with greater peace and independence.”

The Seniors Advisory Board is comprised of residents aged 55 and older, leaders of organizations serving seniors and families, and community leaders representing St. Louis City and County, St. Charles, Jefferson, Warren, and Franklin Counties in Missouri and Madison, St. Clair, and Monroe Counties in Illinois. The board shares decision-making power to advocate for and invest in the needed services.

The Fund is intended to help seniors thrive in their communities and close gaps in services, accessibility, and isolation. The board identified the Fund’s priorities of expanding transportation access for seniors, increasing health navigation supports and assistance, and creating conditions for seniors to age in place at home safely. These priority areas were shaped through an extensive senior community feedback process, including in-person focus groups and online surveys.

Community feedback and proposals presented trending themes with requests for assistance with medical equipment; home repairs; landscaping; gas cards and third-party transportation services; delivery and transportation services for food, medical, educational and social needs; technology support; health education programs; case managers and resource assistance; medical screenings; mental health support; access to healthcare professionals; medical financial assistance; and increased access to community activities and physical activity.

“The public transportation system is totally inadequate. It is not convenient, and it is nowhere near some modern cities in this world where trains are ubiquitous in the city and drive every 10 minutes,” said a focus group participant.

Examples of initiatives funded that address the needs seniors identified in Eastern Missouri and Southern Illinois include:

- Transportation: On-demand accessible rides for older adults with disabilities who have no other form of transportation to medical appointments and essential shopping through **Disability Resource Association, Inc.**
- Health Navigation Support: Health education, connection to healthcare resources, and financial support for life-saving medications for underinsured or uninsured seniors through **Rx Outreach Senior Health and Wellness.**
- Safety: Winter and summer emergency service programs to help seniors age in place safely in their homes, including providing space heaters, winterization services, and air conditioning units, through **Missouri EnergyCare, Inc. (DBA EnergyCare).**

“We are thrilled to receive funding from the Seniors Community Fund to advance our volunteer-led work to provide seniors in Madison County with necessary home repairs and modifications,” said Chris Azar, President of Rebuilding Together Southwest Illinois. “These funds will help ensure that we can continue to meet the growing need for our services, which allow our senior community the opportunity to more safely age in place.”

“We are inspired by the work of these funded initiatives and the greater movement throughout Eastern Missouri and Southern Illinois region to create generational systems change for our seniors,” said Rev. Bethany Johnson-Javois, president and CEO of Deaconess Foundation. “This fund aligns with Deaconess Foundation’s intergenerational commitment to building Beloved Community and embracing healing for all communities as a holistic and interconnected process. Uplifting the concerns and needs of our elders and supporting their requests is a crucial part of these commitments.”

The full list of grant recipients is below:

- Transportation
 - Robert Fulton Development Inc. (Friendly Village Senior Center)
 - Southside Wellness Center (Senior Citizens Center)
 - St. Clair County Older Adult Services Inc.
 - St. Louis Society for the Blind and Visually Impaired (Transportation for Individuals with Vision Loss)
 - Northside Youth And Senior Service Center
 - Walk N Faith
 - Disability Resource Association, Inc.
- Health Navigation
 - Bilingual International Assistant Services
 - Pony Bird, Inc. (Caring Transitions Program)
 - Rx Outreach (Senior Health and Wellness)
 - Memory Care Home Solutions (Dementia Care Navigation)
- Safety

- EnergyCare
- Rebuilding Together Southwest Illinois
- St. John's Community Care.

Learn more about the Seniors Community Fund and grant recipients [here](#).

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About Regional Health Commission

The merged organization of the [St. Louis Regional Health Commission](#) (the RHC) and [Alive and Well Communities](#) (AWC) is a collaborative effort of cross-sector stakeholders and community members to advance health equity across the State of Missouri and beyond. We envision the state of Missouri committed to achieving zero health disparities through a community driven approach that yields health equity in all policy and outcomes. The RHC will serve as a regional model for bi-directional relationship building and shared decision making that powers the connection of community and systems to co-create innovative solutions that yield health equity in all policy and outcomes.

Since its formation in 2001, The RHC has addressed crises in access to care and advanced health justice through its successful implementation of the Gateway to Better Health program, as well as incubation of several initiatives that now exist as separate organizations. These include the [St. Louis Integrated Health Network](#), the [Behavioral Health Network of Greater St. Louis](#), [Health Literacy Media](#) and AWC. Since its formation in 2017, AWC has advanced initiatives to disrupt trauma and toxic stress across the state and in bordering regions.

Today, RHC and AWC work in partnership with communities in St. Louis, Kansas City and Southeast Missouri (“the Bootheel”). For more information, visit stlrhc.org. Follow the Regional Health Commission on Twitter and Instagram @stlrhc and on Facebook at facebook.com/STLRHC/.

About Deaconess Foundation

Deaconess Foundation envisions a community that values the health and well-being of all and gives priority attention to the most invisibilized. Deaconess seeks to create conditions where liberation is the lived reality within seven generations. A ministry of the United Church of Christ, Deaconess has invested more than \$96 million to improve the health of the St. Louis community since 1998. Our grants and cultivated relationships support the accelerated change in conditions through policy, advocacy, and/or organizing efforts building and wielding power to transform systems to respond to the will of the people.

The Foundation’s advocacy and grantmaking footprint includes St. Louis City, St. Louis, Jefferson, St. Charles and Franklin Counties in Missouri and Madison, St. Clair and Monroe Counties in Illinois. For more information, visit deaconess.org. Follow the Foundation on Twitter and Instagram @deaconessfound and on Facebook at facebook.com/deaconessfoundation.