

\$20K in grants awarded to projects that 'believe in Trenton'

By Cristina Rojas, www.NJ.com, August 31, 2017



[TRENTON](#) -- The I Am Trenton Community Foundation is giving nearly \$20,000 in grants to local people and projects they say "believe in Trenton" and are committed to improving the community.

The group awarded 17 grants to support work in community development, cultural connections and youth development, education and training.

The \$19,976 is the largest amount the nonprofit has been able to award since its beginnings in 2007. "Our aim is to build on our fundraising to increase the amount for 2018 to support diverse initiatives that make Trenton even better," board president Kelly Ingram said. The grants range from \$500 to \$2,100.

Melissa Gertz, executive director of the Community Justice Center, says the grant will help them reach more people who suffer from mental illness, brain injury and other "invisible" issues.

"In this changing cultural and political climate, the Community Justice Center has seen an upsurge in distress and fear among those suffering," she said. "Many have been driven underground and into silence or worse, suicide. ... Our grant will assist those most financially impoverished and struggling with these 'invisible' illnesses, empowering them to reclaim their voice and restore the hope necessary to continue fighting for their own lives."

The 2017 grantees are:

TAWA/Jersey Fresh Jam -- The "Each One Teach One Mural Project" will teach 100 students at Hedgepeth-Williams Middle School how to create an education-themed mural.

Community Justice Center -- "Making the Invisible Visible: Reclaiming and Restoring Hope" will provide legal education, outreach, advocacy and representation to those who are financially impoverished and struggling with "invisible" illnesses.

Latin American Legal Defense and Education Fund -- FUTURO is an inclusive and diverse youth mentoring program for first- and second-generation immigrant students living in Trenton that incorporates strong community involvement

Community Adult Acting Classes -- June Ballinger, the artistic director at Passage Theatre, will lead acting classes for adults 18 years and older in the Trenton community.

Artworks -- Building on its success with Art All Day, the group is putting together a guidebook of arts venues, public art and pop-up happenings to serve as both an event guide for the open studio tour and resource for the rest of the year.

Dress for Success Mercer County/LALDEF -- The youth mentoring and skills development workshop will focus on career development skills for Latina girls in their junior or senior year of high school.

The Tre'Devon Lane Foundation -- Its mentoring programs for both boys and girls are designed to help shape the minds of young people by being creative, developing confidence, learning practical skills, promoting leadership, promoting higher education and building a stronger community.

S.L.O.W. Art -- A mural that will be "small in scale, but grand in stature" will be located on the exterior wall of 750 Cass St.

Sprout U School of the Arts -- A two-part financial literacy pilot program, "Cultures of Wealth" experiments with creative, alternative learning: an in-school finance and business basics course for middle-school students and an adult-focused workshop that will work together to empower students to create engaging educational videos that can 'go viral' in Trenton.

Cadwalader Place Civic Association -- The "For You Garden," which transformed an abandoned lot into a community garden on Carteret Avenue to bring neighbors together, will use the money to build a walkway to better serve elderly and disabled residents.

The Children's Home Society of New Jersey -- A series of workshops that educate at-risk children and families about resources for assistance and provide information to strengthen their coping skills in the face of bullying, bias and uncertainty.

Trenton Council of Civic Associations -- The group will update existing directional signs in Chambersburg's restaurant district to reflect the names of current restaurants and capture the "dramatic change" in the city's culinary scene.

Trenton Community Music School -- The Trenton Music Makers' section leaders initiative will promote six "especially dedicated" children from the orchestra program to the role of leaders in their sections and provide them with private lessons, opportunities to play chamber music together and an instrument for their families to keep.

Garden State of Mind -- The project aims to increase the appeal of gardening to attract more young adults in the community and help them see the potential in the vacant lots and participate in their repurposing.

Voices of Trenton -- Lora Productions will give Trentonians between the ages of 5 and 24 access to professional audio equipment and classes to express themselves through music and poetry.

Interfaith Caregivers of Greater Mercer County -- "Project Healthy Bones" is a free 24-week exercise and wellness program for Trenton seniors who have or are at risk of developing osteoporosis.

Urban Mental Health Alliance -- "Make Me Wanna Holla" is a youth spoken word and arts exhibition highlighting the impact of trauma in the lives of youth.