

Insider
For 09/23/09
By Kim Burger

As the leaves turn color and the autumn season begins, so too begins the “Grant Season”. While the Tourism Bureau makes grant money available throughout the year for events and marketing projects designed to bring visitors to town, Community Betterment Grant applications are accepted for consideration only in the fall.

Several years ago, as the number of financial requests being made of the city by community organizations and betterment projects began to increase, the council requested that the bureau devise a distribution process. Since these funds are generated by hotel/motel tax revenues it made sense that the bureau board devise the process, evaluate the requests, and formulate the recommendations. While one would think giving money away is great fun, let me assure you it is not! It’s always interesting and rewarding to be involved with a project that improves quality of life, but requests always outweigh available funds and quality applications are routinely left unfunded. I will say that our process continues to be refined each year as we attempt to be as fair as humanly possible and to leverage the most good from our limited resources. I believe the funding has brought about a great deal of good and would like to thank my board for taking this important responsibility on.

Applications are currently being sought from non-profit organizations managing projects that have a positive and lasting effect on the Cedar Falls community. Fundable projects could include capital improvements including new construction, renovation, restoration and installation of fixtures. Special equipment purchases and operating expenses may also be considered. Projects that have received funding in recent years include flood recovery efforts and replacement of the heating/cooling system for the Cedar Falls Community Theatre, the renovation of the south entrance and restrooms for the Cedar Falls Woman’s Club, repairs to Cedar Falls Historical Society museums, exterior renovations for the University Museum, and support of operational expenses for the Waterloo-Cedar Falls Symphony Orchestra to name a few.

Applications can be picked up at the Visitor Center located at 6510 Hudson Road or can be downloaded from the resource section of the bureau’s web site at www.cedarfallstourism.org, and **must be returned to us by 5pm on Friday, November 6, 2009**. Funds will be available for the period between July 1, 2010 and June 30, 2011.

Applications will be evaluated on the organization’s commitment to the betterment of the Cedar Falls area, to the impact of the investment in terms of the population served, the financial viability of the project or organization, and whether duplication among other projects and organizations exists. Does the applicant serve to enhance the image of the city as a quality place to live? Does the project serve a large number of citizens or does it impact only a small neighborhood or interest group? Does the applicant aggressively seek funding from other sources or are they coming only to the city? Answers to these questions aide in evaluation of the applications as we work through the process.

If you represent an organization or dream of a project that fits these criteria, I encourage you to apply. I'd also like to take this opportunity to remind you that, although we are accepting *betterment* projects at this time, we also accept marketing and tourism development applications throughout the year and awards are not exclusive of one another – in fact, if your project fits both, we invite you to apply to both programs. If you are unsure, please feel free to contact me at 268-4266 and we'll talk through it. Our organization exists to foster, market, service and promote our community as a quality destination for visitors and these grant programs are excellent tools to help with this important work.