

SYNOD OF LINCOLN TRAILS
MISSION INITIATIVE GRANTS

OCT - 9 2014

APPLICATION

Name of Congregation First Presbyterian Church Amount Applied For \$ 1500.00
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Congregation Endorsement Gail Daucay
(Pastor or Clerk of Session)
Presbytery Endorsement J. L. Rubin Presbytery of Blackhawk
(Presbytery Representative)

Please attach answers to the following 3 Questions:

1. Tell us the story of the process you used to make the decision to begin this new missional activity.
2. Outline the way(s) the grant funds will be used in beginning this new missional activity.
3. Trees need 3 essential things to grow strong: **Aeration** (digging the dirt around the roots, loosening of soil so nutrients can get to the roots); **Irrigation** (water, transport of nutrients); **Fertilization** (nutrients). Using this metaphor, we are supplying the seeds or seedlings in the form of grant funds. Tell us the story of the ways that you will be supplying the three essentials while growing a strong new mission through your congregation.



SYNOD OF
LINCOLN
TRAILS

Due October 10, 2014

Please attach answers to the following 3 Questions:

1. Tell us the story of the process you used to make the decision to begin this new missional activity.

Thanks to a community organizer from Illinois Coalition for Community Services, this past year a small group of community members began to meet to discuss the needs in Sterling and Rock Falls, and how they are being met. Primary stakeholders in these meetings were from four faith communities, Sterling schools, and social service agencies. We identified several central issues:

- the existence of multiple ministry silos, in which churches begin a new ministry, but are unable to sustain it without support from other congregations
- the tendency to leap to temporary solutions to long-term problems
- the need to carefully think through the process of identifying problems, raising awareness among stakeholders, and implementing programs.

As a result of these conversations, the group began to operate as a learning organization, and worked together to listen carefully to each other. Eventually, in the spring of 2014, we organized and hosted a poverty simulation, in which participants were able to experience what it is like to be a person in poverty or a provider of services. The evaluations were excellent, and all who participated indicated that their understanding of others was deepened. As a follow-up, we hosted a Justice AND Charity Rally, in which the Rev. Dr. Eddie Knox shared with us how to begin addressing issues of justice even as we do the work of charity.

We continued to meet and discuss how to work together to address needs in our community. Our town has a very high rate of food insecurity, and there are multiple programs to address that: Loaves and Fishes provides a daily breakfast; Firehouse of God provides evening meals; Let's Feed Our Children distributes thousands of sack lunches throughout the summer; multiple food pantries are available. Still, in Rock Falls, more than 80 percent of elementary age children are eligible for free or reduced lunches. In Sterling, the numbers are slightly lower, but over 70 percent.

We decided that we could collaborate on a project to provide food for the weekend for school children, involving faith communities and service providers from the outset. This food would be provided in the form of "Buddy Bags" which could be supplied and packed by volunteers and placed in children's lockers for them to take home from school on Friday. But we also want to address the underlying issues that create child hunger and poverty, so we will begin a program of education for community members about why we are doing this project, and what we can do in addition to providing direct food assistance.

2. Outline the way(s) the grant funds will be used in beginning this new missional activity. The grant funds will be used for two main activities.

1. Publicity and educational materials - \$200
2. Purchase of supplies for bags, and purchase of food from our food bank for the Buddy Bags - \$1,300

3. Trees need 3 essential things to grow strong:

Using this metaphor, we are supplying the seeds or seedlings in the form of grant funds.

Tell us the story of the ways that you will be supplying the three essentials while growing a strong new mission through your congregation.

Aeration

Our preparation for beginning to grow this program is a public showing of the documentary, "A Place at the Table." We will invite community leaders (mayors, school officials, and faith leaders) to a panel discussion after the film. Using the registrations from the poverty simulation, we will invite stakeholders to attend and ask those attending to bring contributions of food or money to buy food that can be sent home in "Buddy Bags." We will also publicize the film through social media, word of mouth, church bulletins and newsletters, and through the schools. We hope to show the film on World Food Day. Initial funding for the documentary screening will be provided by the mission fund of First Presbyterian Church.

Following the screening of the film, we'll take advantage of the community spirit in our local "Make a Difference Day," in which volunteers give time and energy toward helping others, to pack the first set of Buddy Bags and spread the word about the project.

We have also been asked to provide additional poverty simulation events for area schools, both faculty and students. Our faith communities will explore with their congregations ways in which we can address root causes of hunger, such as the letters project with Bread for the World.

Irrigation (water, transport of nutrients)

Our community has seen a number of worthy projects begin, only to gradually die due to lack of sustainability of resources and volunteers. Frequently, churches begin programs to address local needs, then discover that they do not have sufficient energy to continue without help from other congregations. Sometimes, this help comes; other times, it does not and the projects fade away. We want to make sure from the start that we have sufficient support and commitment that this project can grow and thrive. To that end, we will develop a small steering committee responsible for continual publicity and fund raising through churches and community groups. We will involve youth through our local school programs for teens which require community service hours, and we will actively work to sustain partnerships to assure that bags continue to be filled and sent home with children.

Fertilization (nutrients).

We can count on additional annual contributions from the mission committee of First Presbyterian Church if we can get the project started, and we will request that other churches and other food programs commit to ongoing support. While First Presbyterian Church will be the fiscal agent, Buddy Bags program will not become just another church program – it will continue to be a community wide partnership. We are in conversation with United Way and with several other congregations about how they could support this important ministry. With this seed money from Synod of Lincoln Trails, we expect we will be able to secure long-term commitments from other organizations, including other congregational mission funds, civic clubs, and United Way.