

## **Here to Serve Fund & Selected Recipients**

The Heartland Technology Here to Serve Fund was created to give non-profits in need an opportunity to apply for funding while empowering shareholders to influence the fund's direction. Applicants were required to answer two main questions: how their organization directly benefits our shareholders and what projects or initiatives this funding would help with.

The \$10,000 fund will be dispersed amongst the three recipients listed below that were chosen by our selection committee. Each organization will receive a percentage of the total funds based on the votes they receive. You can read more about the organizations below.

### **Friends of the Jesup Public Library**

The Jesup Public Library serves the community in various ways. 24,154 people of all ages used the library and 37,145 items were checked out in 2024. We've moved beyond books to provide athletic equipment, STEM activities and programs, multiple book clubs, public meeting space, and more.

Through dedicated programs provided by our Friends of the Library volunteers, we can reach a new generation of readers and users of the JPL. Summer reading programming draws more than 100 children each week, dozens of children have reached the milestone of 1,000 Books before Kindergarten, and now we are partnering with the Dolly Parton Imagination Library to provide books to our youngest readers - those aged 0 to 5 who will receive a new book in the mail each month, at a cost of \$27 per child per year. The Friends of the Library is dedicated to providing this service to our community, and the grant would enable this program to continue for years to come.

### **Jesup Elementary**

Jesup Elementary is part of the Jesup Community School District in Jesup, Iowa, and serves approximately 450 students in grades preschool through 4th grade. Our building attracts many open-enrolled students from other districts due to its strong reputation for excellence. One of the largest increases in enrollment during this time has been in our 3 and 4-year-old preschool programs. The school district has the mission of, The Jesup Community School District will develop well-rounded, productive, responsible, caring citizens who are lifelong learners. This mission begins with our youngest learners as they begin their school careers with us.

An essential component of a quality preschool program includes play, exploration, problem-solving, and social interaction opportunities. The preschool playground is where these skills can be modeled and practiced for our youngest students. Our current playground is over 30 years old and simply not up to safety standards. The plan is to install a new inclusive playground that can be utilized not only by our preschool students but also by the entire Jesup Community, as it will be open to everyone. This new playground will include inclusive components for use by students with special needs and also offer a design that encourages collaboration and creativity.

## **Jesup High School Hope Squad**

Hope Squad is a national school-based, peer-to-peer suicide prevention program that empowers trained and mentored students who are nominated by their peers to provide intentional outreach to their fellow students. Jesup Community School District has brought this educational program to Jesup High School utilizing the curriculum within our Hope Squad group and expanding awareness to our student body. Our mission is to reduce youth suicide, increase overall mental wellness, and connect students to community-helping resources through education, training, and peer intervention. Buchanan County data collected from the 2018 Iowa Youth Survey shows that 31% of teens contemplated suicide sometime over the past 12 months and 34% answered they felt so sad and hopeless every day for 2 weeks or more in a row that they stopped their usual activities. These numbers show there is a large need in our community to bring hope, connection, and tools to our local teens.

Jesup High School Hope Squad is in our second year of implementation and during this school year, 23 students were referred by Hope Squad members, peers, and school staff to be evaluated and supported by our school social worker for a mental health crisis and suicidal ideation concerns. Our program goals include identifying students in mental health crises and connecting them to supportive services, creating a culture shift of increasing help-seeking behaviors among Jesup High School students, and reducing the stigma of mental health. Our Hope Squad students have become very invested in this program and have sponsored many school-wide activities including providing mental wellness education during assemblies, a HOPE chain created with elementary students, placing notes of affirmation, kindness, and hope on student lockers, giving students information on helping resources within our community, and sharing skills with peers learned in our Hope Squad meetings. Through supporting this program, we can continue to increase the connectedness students feel to peers, school staff, and our community, which has been shown to increase feelings of mental wellness.