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Published Saturday, June 28, 2003

Worthy projects funded

Money goes to programs for kids

By Sandy Strickland
 Staff writer,

The Southeast and Greater Arlington/Beaches citizens planning advisory committees have awarded \$36,378 to help fund seven projects, including an after-school computer program, field trips, a fall festival and summer camp.

Each of the city's six planning advisory committees annually receives up to \$25,000 in grant funds from the city's general appropriation to the Jacksonville Children's Commission. The commission forwards the grant applications to the advisory committees for evaluation.

Matt Thompson, the commission's program associate, said there's a feast of good applications some years and a famine in others, calling this a moderately good year.

Greater Arlington/Beaches, for instance, got only four applications, but they were all worthy of funding, said Helen Ludwig, who heads the advisory group's grants subcommittee. Ludwig said she wishes more organizations were aware of the grants.

"We definitely need more people to take advantage of them," Ludwig said. "They don't have to match it with sweat equity. It's taxpayer dollars that come back for people to think outside the box in working with children in their communities."

Ludwig said each application was carefully checked by two committee volunteers, who even monitor them partway through the program.

"There are some years that we have not granted all the money because we did not think the applicants were worthy or were asking for too much and could find some of it elsewhere," she said.

One of the largest grants -- \$10,000 -- went to Omni Community Development Corp., a faith-based organization on Arlington Road that offers an after-school tutorial program.

"My committee members were very impressed," said Tom Shouvin, who helped scope it out. "They've got a computer lab that's as good as any I've seen in the public school system."

Shouvin said Omni works with students in both public and private schools in the Arlington area, often free of charge. Omni coordinates with teachers to find out where the students need help.

"They don't just let them play," he said, adding the money will be used to buy updated programs and equipment. "They know where they are behind, where they need help in reading and math and utilize their computers to tie in with what's going on in the schools."

Arlington/Beaches awarded the following:

Arlington Family Branch YMCA on Fort Caroline Road got \$3,450 to assist with expenses for its summer camp for children in Justina.

Kensington Association Inc. got \$9,953 for children's activities and field trips.

Omni Community Development Corp. got \$10,000 to upgrade its computer lab and provide educational field trips.

Woodland Acres Neighborhood Association got \$1,725 to help stage children's activities during its fall festival.

The Southeast district awarded the following:

Power to Succeed, Journey into Womanhood at New St. James Holy Family Church on Sunbeam Road got \$5,250 for its girls program focusing on academics, women's health, nutrition and personal development.

St. Joseph's Catholic Church on St. Augustine Road got \$5,000 to help provide arts and crafts and supplies for its summer harvest festival.

Wayman Community Development Corp. on Sanchez Road got \$1,000 to help with summer camp expenses.

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