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## New Waterloo teen center tops first Schoitz Foundation grant list

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This architect's rendering provided to the city of Waterloo shows a proposed Boys and Girls Clubs Teen and Educational Center in the 800 block of East Fourth Street, Waterloo.

Courtesy drawing

**WATERLOO** —A Waterloo teen center project will be the first big beneficiary of the new Otto Schoitz Foundation.

The foundation has awarded \$1.75 million in grants to 16 organizations for community projects, the largest being \$1 million for a major new initiative by Boys and Girls Clubs of the Cedar Valley.

The foundation was created with proceeds from Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare's May 1, 2016, transfer of its Iowa facilities — Covenant Medical Center in Waterloo, Sartori Memorial Hospital in Cedar Falls and Mercy Hospital in Oelwein — to Mercy Health Network of Des Moines.

The foundation gave its largest initial grant toward the construction of a new teen education and training center in the 800 block of East Fourth Street across from East High School.



Foundation will invest \$50 million for charity

The center, an estimated \$2.5 million to \$3 million facility, would be part of an overall \$5 million fundraising campaign Boys and Girls Clubs hopes to initiate next month to construct that building and renovate its existing Lime Street facilities.

The new building would be roughly 12,000 square feet and be “just for teenagers” and within walking distance of East, club director Chuck Rowe said.

“Six or seven years ago teens were probably 6 percent of the population of the Boys and Girls Club. Now that’s over 30 percent,” Rowe said.

The center will help teens with college and career preparation and simply be a place to do homework, Rowe said, in response to recent surveys of teens themselves. Some have been club members for years and have outgrown activities for younger kids. The club also wants to attract teens who may think the existing Lime Street facilities are just for younger kids.

The center will have space for tutoring, computer and digital graphics skills development, music creativity, college testing preparation, counseling, direct homework assistance and supervised recreational space.

Moving the teens into their own building will allow the club to expand programming on Lime Street for younger members.

Pending fundraising, it's hoped construction can begin in March on the new building, and it would take about a year to build, Rowe said, complementing other development in the area. The club also has locations in Evansdale, Holmes Junior High in Cedar Falls and Sacred Heart School.

Rowe said over about eight years the club has grown from seeing about 80 youths a day to more than 200 a day at all locations.

The club also has received donations from numerous local foundations and trusts, including the McElroy Trust, the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa, the Young Family Foundation and trusts established by the Christensen and Gallagher families.

The new building will feature the Ross Christensen Dental and Vision Clinic, offering screenings by volunteer dentists for youths. Christensen, an orthodontist who died in November 2011, was a longtime Waterloo community leader and Waterloo school board president.

Otto Schoitz Foundation chairman Dennis D. Clark said the Boys and Girls Club "has more than demonstrated its great value to the youth of this city."

"Thanks to the lead gift from the Schoitz Foundation and a major gift from the Christensen family, it has leveraged a number of other high level gifts," Rowe said.

Camille Hogan, foundation vice chairwoman, said the organization also chose to support "many other outstanding nonprofit organizations" aligned with its mission of "improving the health and well being of the Cedar Valley."

Other grant recipients and their projects include:

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Iowa, \$36,000 to extend its programming of providing one-to-one youth mentoring.

Christian Community Development/House of Hope, \$200,000 to provide homeless, single mothers with transitional housing and support toward self-sufficiency. The organization is renovating the former Christensen, Christensen & Bigleow orthodontics building along West Fourth Street.

Covenant Medical Center, \$250,000 to renovate its emergency department to better serve behavioral health patients in a safe and secure area.

EMBARC, Ethnic Minorities of Burma Advocacy and Resource Center, \$30,000 to develop an interpretation and community health worker social enterprise for refugees in Waterloo.

Grin and Grow's child care center, \$10,000 to provide upgrades in the learning environment and meet both state and national standards.

Iowa Heartland Habitat for Humanity, \$25,000 to assist in the organization's Neighborhood Revitalization Project, focused on building or rehabilitating homes in Waterloo's Church Row Historic and Walnut neighborhoods.

Iowa Legal Aid, \$20,000 to provide free legal and supportive services to custodial parents in Child in Need of Assistance proceedings.

The Junior League of Waterloo-Cedar Falls, \$8,000 for its League's Lockers Project, providing uniforms, school supplies and basic hygienic items to disadvantaged Waterloo high school students.

Leader Valley Foundation, \$100,000 for the Leader in Me Project in schools to develop character and competence.

National Alliance on Mental Illness of Black Hawk County, \$3,000 for its programs.

Northeast Iowa Area Agency on Aging, \$6,600 to develop, promote and implement a local fall prevention coalition.

Operation Threshold's Home Based Parent Education Program, \$16,800 to support parent education classes.

Quota International of Waterloo, \$5,000 for its Cops 'n' Kids Literacy Program with the Waterloo Police Department and the Waterloo School District to distribute books to youth.

University of Northern Iowa Foundation, \$35,000 for the Center for Violence Prevention, to implement a multi-tier violence prevention initiative in Waterloo with a team of law enforcement and social service professionals.

The Waterloo Writing Project, \$4,600 for its Youth Leader Project, to provide space for young authors to craft, collaborate, critique and support each other.

The Otto Schoitz Foundation is taking applications Dec. 1-31 for grants next spring. Application information is found on the foundation website, [www.ottoschoitzfoundation.org](http://www.ottoschoitzfoundation.org).

