For Immediate Release  
November 26, 2019  
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Foundation board approves 24 grants and initiatives

A clinic in Tok, a program supporting small business entrepreneurs in Anchorage, and a statewide initiative designed to increase youth access to camps are among the projects approved by the Rasmuson Foundation board at its November meeting.

From Naknek to Petersburg, the board approved more than $6 million in grants to Alaska nonprofits, tribal organizations and local governments and $4.6 million to support investments in arts and other initiatives.

The entire list of just-approved grants and programs is attached.

A $450,000 grant to the Mat-Su Borough will support a new library and upgraded community center in Willow. The Sun’aq Tribe of Kodiak is getting help with expanding its primary tribal enterprise, the WildSource seafood processing facility, with a $375,000 award. Anchorage Community Land Trust is receiving $350,000 over four years to support a program that benefits entrepreneurs (Set Up Shop) and Cook Inlet Lending Center Inc. is receiving nearly $1 million between a grant and loan to provide capital for small business lending including Set Up Shop entrepreneurs.

“These projects have real impact on individual lives and on communities,” said Rasmuson Foundation President and CEO Diane Kaplan. “The Church of Love in Spenard, for instance, is a place where a community becomes stronger through art and creativity, and we are supporting a major remodel of that building, owned by Cook Inlet Housing Authority. Concerts, art shows and art camps all happen there. Artists and small business people rent space there. One tenant is a chocolate maker who graduated from Set Up Shop.”

The board agreed to continue three established programs and begin a new initiative. The Individual Artist Awards, one of the Foundation’s marquee programs, was approved for another three years as was
Strengthening Organizations, in which nonprofits receive small grants for strategic planning, leadership development and skill building. A partnership with the Alaska Humanities Forum for the Magnetic North film series of documentaries about influential Alaskans will continue on with six more films.

The new initiative is a two-year camp pilot. The goal is to help more youth attend camp through scholarships and to improve the quality of the experience.

Two individual camp projects also were approved, including $330,000 to the Salvation Army of Alaska for improvements to King’s Lake Camp near Wasilla. Elmer Rasmuson, one of the foundation’s founders, helped construct some of the camp facilities and all three of his children — board chairman Ed Rasmuson and board members Judy Rasmuson and Lile Gibbons — spent time there as kids, as did Ed and Cathy Rasmuson’s daughter, board treasurer and state Sen. Natasha von Imhof. The award to the Salvation Army was made during a Mat-Su community luncheon with the Rasmuson Foundation board.

The board meets twice a year, usually in June and November. This month, board members spent a day in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough visiting partner organizations and grantees: Mat-Su Health Foundation, which works to improve the health of Mat-Su residents; MyHouse, a youth shelter and support center; The Children’s Place, a child advocacy center; Set Free Alaska, a treatment center; and Valley Residential Services Inc., which provides workforce, senior and special needs housing.

About the Foundation
Through grantmaking and initiatives, Rasmuson Foundation aims to promote a better life for all Alaskans. Main funding areas are the arts, housing, homelessness, education, health care, and organizational and community development. The foundation was created in 1955 by Jenny Rasmuson to honor her late husband, E.A. Rasmuson.