



## Center *for* Rural Health

University of North Dakota  
School of Medicine & Health Sciences

# **Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota Caring Foundation Rural Health Grant Program Year 13**

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**ND** *Caring*  
FOUNDATION

**Blue Cross Blue Shield North Dakota Caring Foundation  
Rural Health Grant Program (Year 13)  
Funding Period: February 15, 2018 – February 15, 2019  
Final Report**

**What is the status of the Year 13 BCBSND Caring Foundation funded projects?**

In February 2018, Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota (BCBSND) Caring Foundation funded **13** rural health grants. The grants were intended to stimulate new thinking among support providers and their communities as promoters of community wellness. The general purpose of the funded grant projects is to demonstrate collaborative efforts involving rural healthcare organizations and their communities in supporting physical activity and overall wellness for all people residing in rural North Dakota.

**Overview - Rural Health Grant Projects Year 13**

- Twenty grant proposals were received, requesting a total of \$95,899.
- Thirteen awards were made, for a total of \$40,125.
- The funding period ran from February 15, 2018 to February 15, 2019.
- Awards ranged from \$2,500 to \$4,000.
- Eleven of the 13 grant projects were completed by the February 15, 2019 deadline, and the remaining two received an extension and were completed by June 2019.

**The focus areas addressed in these projects were:**

- Activities that endorse and support physical activity (eight projects).
- Supplies that endorse and support physical activity (nine projects).
- Programs that endorse and support physical activity (four projects).
- Events that endorse and support physical activity (nine projects).

**Nine of the 13 grantees indicated:** They would not have been able to implement this project without BCBSND Caring Foundation grant funds.

**Leveraging funds**

Five of the 13 grantees indicated that the BCBSND Caring Foundation grant enabled each of them to leverage \$8,000 or more from other sources.

**Number and ages of people who participated in the community projects**

The ages of participants ranged from infant to 90+ years. An exact number of participants is not available from all grantees.

**Facility experiences**

All facilities reported a positive experience with the administration process of the grants (coordinated by the Center for Rural Health) and the project marketing components (coordinated by BCBSND Caring Foundation).

## COMPLETED PROJECTS

### 1. St. Andrew's Health Center, Bottineau

Funds awarded: \$4,000

**General purpose:** The grant funds were used to construct a second dedicated pickleball court at the Lake Metigoshe VFW Park on land owned by Bottineau County. The court was completed in late June, 2018. A chain-link fence was installed and a surface coat with sealer was applied to the cement court. Following completion of the court, two tournaments were hosted by the Turtle Mountain Pickleball Club and a donation was made to the Bottineau Food Pantry from proceeds of the second tournament. Court-side benches were also installed late in the summer.



**Partners:** Bottineau County Commissioners granted permission to use Bottineau County land for the project construction site. St. Andrew's Health Center, Alfred Sams, CFO, coordinated with the Turtle Mountain Pickleball Club and submitted the grant proposal. The Turtle Mountain Pickleball Club provided volunteer construction labor and fundraising efforts.



#### Activities completed:

- The planning and construction of the pickleball court.
- Free instructional sessions.
- Hosted a pickleball tournament to raise funds and food for the local food pantry.

**Focus area(s):** Activities, supplies, and events that endorse and support activity.

**Number and ages of participants:** Ages varied from younger than 12 to older than 65 years old.

**Challenges/barriers:** The biggest challenge was raising the funds necessary to complete the project. County land was provided for the project, but no monetary funding.

**Impact measurement:** The addition of a second dedicated pickleball court facilitated continued growth in pickleball participation because more people can play at the same time without having to wait for court time. It also makes it possible to host tournaments, which was not feasible with just one court.

**Success story:** The success story that produced the most positive feedback was the pickleball tournament which was held after completion of the second court at the Lake Metigoshe VFW Park. Participants came from several distant places and stayed two or three days, which provided a financial benefit to local business operations. Several of the tournament participants expressed their appreciation for the pickleball courts and tournament opportunity, along with their stated intention to return for future participation. They also stated they will spread the word for others to come to future events.

## 2. Carrington Health Center, Carrington

**Funds awarded:** \$4,000

**General purpose:** CHI St. Alexius Health Carrington partnered with the Foster County/Foster County Commissioners and the Carrington Kiwanis Club (CKC) to begin replacing portions of existing 1960's era park equipment in the Foster County Courthouse Park. Total funding of \$25,000 was secured during the grant period to install a new, main playground feature in the Courthouse Park.

**Partners:** Foster County/Foster County Commissioners assumed ownership, liability, and maintenance of the grant funded equipment; provided a 10 yard minimum dumpster during equipment installation; provided access to water during equipment installation; secured removal of old equipment and site preparation for new equipment; determined location of utilities in relation to installation site for new equipment and conclude no relocation of utilities is needed; secured required permits; and provided labor and equipment to unload freight containers of the new park/playground equipment. CKC worked to secure additional funding for the remaining portion of the project budget not secured through the BCBSND Caring Foundation grant and engaged additional community organizations to help in fundraising. CHI St. Alexius Health Carrington was the lead applicant for the BCBSND Caring Foundation grant; worked collaboratively with the CKC and Foster County/Foster County Commissioners to administrate the grant work plan and secure additional funding; submitted all required documentation to the Center for Rural Health per the grant requirements; and will coordinate "Play Days" at the Courthouse Park once final installation is complete.

### **Activities completed:**

- Total funding of \$25,000 secured
- Playground equipment ordered and received, to be installed at a later date

**Focus area(s):** Supplies that endorse and support activity.

**Age range of participants:** Ages varied from younger than 12 to older than 65 years old.

**Challenges/barriers:** The project's biggest challenge was raising all the money needed for the project within grant timelines. The team worked together to continue seeking funding

opportunities and write the proposals along with engaging additional community organizations for fundraisers.

**Impact measurement:** Project outcomes include civic engagement from each grant partner organization that has actively participated in the fundraising. These efforts have resulted in raising 100% of the money required for the new main piece of park equipment.

**Success story:** The most notable success was the teamwork amongst grant partners and beyond to help raise the \$25,000. It has sparked continued interest by the grant partners to continue with efforts to add more pieces of park equipment.

### 3. Pembina County Memorial Hospital Association, Cavalier **Funds awarded: \$2,500**

**General purpose:** Pembina County Memorial Hospital Association (PCMHA) has instituted an Employee Wellness Program to promote and support the health, safety, and well-being of employees. The program aims to improve the health and well-being of PCMHA employees' lives through health education and activities that will support lifestyle change, resulting in improved productivity, morale and healthcare costs.

**Activities completed:**

- An on-site gym has been created, with two pieces of equipment from the grant and two other pieces donated
- Nutrition education including "Fruity Tuesday," a healthy potluck, farmer's market encouragement, hummus tasting and sharing of garden produce
- Two-month "waist-management" challenge, along with physical activity challenges



**Focus area(s):** Activities, programs, and events that endorse and support activity.

**Partners:**

Several hospital employees (CEOs, HR, lab, nurses, nutrition specialists, IT, business manager, accounts payable) participated in various roles, including managing the financials, serving as committee members and education leaders, and helping with the space renovation. The foundation director served as the project director, wrote the grant, was a committee member, and an education leader. Maintenance donated sheet rock and cleaned out the rooms that were utilized for the project.

**Age range of participants:** Ages varied from 13 to more than 65 years old.

**Challenges/barriers:** The biggest challenge was getting an electrician and plumber to complete their portion of the project.

**Impact measurement:**

- Fifty attendees at the health potluck
- Fifty-seven people attended the healthy choices snack tasting
- Increased usage of the on-site gym

**Success story:** This project demonstrated success in that there are people using the onsite gym and participating in the activities.

**4. St. Luke's Hospital, Crosby**

**Funds awarded: \$2,500**

**General purpose:** St. Luke's Fourth Annual Crosby Color Splash 5K Fun Run/Walk was a community-driven family fun event. The event, held August 25, 2018, was co-sponsored and coordinated by St. Luke's and community volunteers. The profits from the event were used to provide track equipment for the Divide County High School track and field team. The event had more than 145 participants and raised more than \$5,000.



**Partners:** A local business owner was responsible for collecting funds and sponsorships. The Divide County High School track and field coach collected sponsorships and set up staffing for the day of the event. St. Luke's Human Resource Department and hospital and care center employees collected sponsorships, coordinated marketing, and provided staffing for the event.

**Activities completed:** St. Luke's Fourth Annual Crosby Color Splash 5K Fun Run/Walk held on August 25, 2018.

**Focus area(s):** Supplies and an event that endorse and support activity.

**Age range of participants:** One hundred forty-five participants from younger than 12 to residents more than 65 years old.

**Impact measurement:** The measurement was to analyze the amount raised, as well as the total number of participants in hopes of increasing that number over past years events. They were able to see that participation was down some from the previous year.

**Success story:** The event gave back to the community, area youth and families, and promoted healthier lifestyles.

**5. CHI St. Alexius Health Dickinson Foundation, Dickinson** **Funds awarded: \$2,500**

**General purpose:** The Glow Run 5K was a fun 5K held late in the evening designed for glow apparel and accessories to stand out in the dark. The 5K proceeds went to St. Alexius's Diabetes Department.

**Partners:** The Glow Run committee, which was made up of diabetes educators, hospital and clinic administration, marketing and foundation employees, and other healthcare professionals, worked together to plan a route, order supplies, set up decorations, take down decorations, and smoothly operate the Glow Run 5K.

**Activities completed:** The Glow Run was held at a local park with a path. Glow decorations were included to enhance the glow effect, and trees were lit up to highlight the scenery.

**Focus area(s):** An event that endorses and supports physical activity.

**Age range of participants:** Children younger than 12 to adults up to age 64 years old.

**Challenges/barriers:** The biggest challenge was obtaining sponsorships from area businesses. Since the event had not been held for the past couple of years, businesses opted for lower sponsorships to see if the reintroduction of the event was successful.

**Impact measurement:** Measured project outcomes for the Glow Run 5K are the number of participants, total dollars raised, total expenses, and a learned experience of executing a 5K. The Glow Run committee now knows what to expect when planning for next year. Total expenses for the event were \$3,326.57; total income for the event was \$7,033.04.

**Success story:** This project's most notable success was the marketing and area communication getting the word out to gain interest. Facebook traffic helped gain participants and helped answer the questions of those who might be interested. Another great success was the smooth registration process the night of the event. The venue that was chosen was great for participants to gather, take pictures, stretch, and visit before the race began.

**6. Jacobson Memorial Hospital Care Center, Elgin** **Funds awarded: \$1,335**

**General purpose:** Jacobson Memorial Hospital Care Center (JMHCC) worked with the Elgin/New Leipzig School to establish a community fitness center that provides 24-hour access. The two organizations raised \$50,000 since the origination of the grant but are continuing to work on

the design, approval, and construction of the fitness center. Since the fitness center will be located in the school, JMHCC is waiting for the school's design team to finalize plans for the School Board to approve.

**Partners:** Partners included JMHCC, Elgin/New Leipzig School, the community fitness committee, and donors to the project. The committee provided assistance in planning and fundraising, and offered recommendations for action. The donors played a role in providing financial support.

**Activities completed:** The fundraising goal of \$50,000 has been reached.

**Focus area(s):** Activities, supplies, and events that endorse and support activity.

**Age range of participants:** Ages range from 13 to more than 65 years old.

**Challenges/barriers:** The biggest challenge was to educate the public on the plan and start the fundraising campaign.

**Impact measurement:** While the community is still waiting for the facility to be built, the biggest impact was raising the necessary funds.

**Success story:** The biggest success is that the group was able to raise \$50,000 toward the community fitness center. JMHCC has a couple of donors who are waiting for a status update and may be interested in donating more.

## 7. Spirit Lake Nation, Ft. Totten

**Funds awarded:** \$3,500

**General purpose:** The purpose of the grant was to prepare and implement an inter-tribal workshop onsite at the Spirit Lake Nation that will certify lifestyle coaches to lead community diabetes prevention education in tribal communities, especially in topics of nutrition and physical fitness. In addition, the project will create partnerships among healthcare providers and community members to offer effective diabetes prevention in tribal communities in culturally meaningful ways.

**Partners:** Spirit Lake Senior Services assisted with co-hosting the training; North Dakota State University Extension Service provided the lifestyle coach training; and the Spirit Lake Casino & Resort was the venue.



**Activities completed:** A lifestyle coach training event was held and completed by 27 individuals.

**Focus area(s):** Events and programs that endorse and support activity.

**Age ranges of participants:** Ages varied from 20 to more than 65 years old.

**Challenges/barriers:** It was a challenge to stay connected to one another. There are programs that have reached out to one another following the training, but haven't continued to follow up on each other's progress. Reminders can be set to contact one another or schedule conference calls or meetings to display progress and share successes and challenges.

**Impact measurement:** The entire training was completed by 27 people with four tribes working together. All tribes were able to identify at least two specific goals for use of the National Diabetes Prevention Program within their respective tribe.

**Success story:** Having 27 people complete the entire training and become diabetes prevention lifestyle coaches. The following tribes held programs: MHA Nation, Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, Spirit Lake Tribe, and Standing Rock Sioux Tribe.

## 8. Unity Medical Center, Grafton

Funds awarded: \$3,250

**General purpose:** A worksite-wellness program was created for the 140 Unity Medical Center (UMC) employees. The program included: monthly lunch and learns, food displays, mindful living tips, and wellness challenges. Throughout the year, monthly lunch and learns were held for employees of UMC, as well as monthly nutrition demonstrations. The lunch and learns varied with topics in both mental and physical health.



**Partners:** Key partners for this project were the administrative staff who were very supportive and helped providers and nurses to adjust their schedules so they could participate in the activities. A few outside speakers came in for the lunch and learns to present on various topics. Several business owners in Grafton provided their expertise at the lunch and learns as well, while some heard about the program and asked for a dietitian to speak to employees about healthier dietary choices at their business meetings.

**Activities that were completed:** Lunch and learns and nutrition demonstrations were held monthly, as well as a six-week wellness challenges for the staff, with between 30-50 people attending each event.

**Focus area(s):** Activities, events, and supplies that endorse and support activity.

**Age range of participants:** Ages varied from younger than 30 to more than 65 years old.



**Challenges/barriers:** The biggest challenge was being creative with how staff could participate. For those working 8:00 am to 5:00 pm it was easy, but for staff working evening and weekend hours it became a bit of a challenge. Another challenge was that people didn't necessarily continue doing these things once the accountability group was done. If it wasn't led by the group nobody stepped in. The hope was for some of these things to take off within the departments, but that didn't happen as much as was hoped.

**Impact measurement:** Measured outcomes included staff members losing weight and keeping it off. Staff members have added new habits to their lives, such as meditation, walking during lunch, more ergonomic-friendly work stations, gratitude journals and jars, and the kitchen has made changes to what is served for lunches.

**Success story:** There were two particularly notable successes. The first was the wellness challenge that included activities in the areas of body mind and spirit. Within this challenge was a weight loss piece. In total, UMC employees lost more than 125 pounds. That is a great success and following up employees had kept off more than 80 of those pounds. The other success was the number of people who attended the lunch and learn events. Some people came in on their days off, some providers scheduled their lunch breaks around the event, and others made sure they were in Grafton every last Wednesday of the month. Staff looked forward to these lunch and learns and asked about them frequently.

#### 9. St. Aloisius Medical Center, Harvey

**Funds awarded:** \$3,250

**General purpose:** St. Aloisius used grant funds to purchase supplies and ensure the sustainability of offering the Diabetes Empowerment Education Program (DEEP) free of charge to community members with diabetes and their caregivers. Two classes were held to help people take control of their diabetes and reduce the risks related to the disease, with a total of 20 participants completing the program.

**Partners:** Sara Gregg, RN from St. Aloisius Medical Center served as the DEEP instructor and grant writer. Joye Stolz, RN from Wells County District Health Unit also served as a DEEP instructor.

**Activities completed:** Two free community diabetes classes were held with a total of 20 participants.

**Focus area(s):** Programs that endorse and support activity.

**Age range of participants:** Ages varied from 51 to more than 65 years old.

**Challenges/barriers:** Recruiting patients for classes was the biggest challenge, which was offset somewhat by offering classes free of charge.

**Impact measurement:** Based on the pre and post-test results, most participants had an increase in knowledge and had positive behavior changes. There was an average A1C reduction of 0.6% in both classes.

**Success story:** For the two classes offered under the grant, there has been an average 0.6% decrease in A1C levels, with an overall 0.8% drop since the start of the program. This reduction of A1C is a large indicator in the reduction in risk of complications and disability.

**10. Central Valley Health District, Jamestown** **Funds awarded:** \$2,500

**General purpose:** Central Valley Health District, together with the Gackle Park Board, raised funds to implement a Frisbee golf course in the local public city park in Gackle, North Dakota.

**Partners:** Partners included the Gackle Park Board and Central Valley Health District.

**Activities completed:** Equipment was purchased for the park prior to February and will be installed at a later date when the weather allows for it.

**Focus area(s):** Activities and supplies that endorse and support activity.

**Age ranges of participants:** Ages varied from younger than 12 to more than 65 years old.

**Challenges/barriers:** The biggest challenges were the course design and finding additional fundraising.

**Impact measurement:** The park will be monitored for usage once the Frisbee golf course is installed, which should provide exercise and activities for community members.

**Success story:** To date the equipment has been provided but not yet installed, but they are anticipating an increased opportunity to exercise in a rural community.

## 11. City-County Health District, Valley City

Funds awarded: \$3,250

**General purpose:** The Faith Communities Alive (FCA) program provided collaborative training, education, tools, and support to faith communities addressing healthful eating and physical activity to promote overall well-being. A steering committee of two volunteers per church was assembled and trained by North Dakota State University (NDSU) Extension on September 7, which prepared them to provide assessment evaluations and corresponding education within their faith community. The results of these evaluations were tallied by NDSU and wellness plans were tailored and carried out by the volunteers within their respective communities to reduce health risks.

**Partners:** Key partners in the project were a licensed registered dietitian at NDSU Extension and a member of Faith Lutheran Church, who was the director for the project and lined up the training for the steering committee and provided support and resources for the volunteer members in the project. Another licensed registered dietitian at ON THE MOVE at City County Health District and a member of Our Savior's Lutheran Church also offered support and knowledge for the steering committee and clergy. An ON THE MOVE partner and member of Epworth Methodist Church was a member of the steering committee. Other members of the steering committee included a Faith Lutheran Church member, three members of the Nazarene Church, and the pastor of Our Savior's Lutheran Church.



There were also a number of volunteers who assisted with FCA activities at each church.

**Activities complete:** Four churches each had two volunteers complete training with NDSU Extension. The volunteers then performed evaluations within their faith community and implemented evidence-based health and wellness curricula.

**Focus area(s):** Activities and programs that support and endorse physical activity

**Age ranges of participants:** Ages varied from younger than 12 to more than 65 years old.

**Challenges/barriers:** Two challenges that were encountered were that 1) funding for purchasing the healthy food items was not always easily available and 2) the serving group leader changes each month so it can be difficult to have consistency in healthy options. It was suggested that each church set up a method to have money set aside to purchase the healthy items at the beginning of the month. Several churches offer online giving, so one suggestion was to have the online monthly giving option include a line item for donations for this fund. The serving group chairperson could ask for donations from the serving group committee members and then he/she could pick up the healthy items at the beginning of each month to have on-

hand so they would be available each week as a choice at fellowship time. The weekly serving group members were also encouraged to bring easy fruit or vegetable options to include at fellowship time. The barrier of fruits and vegetables being more expensive was solved by following one of the previous recommendations.

**Impact measurement:** There is a written policy in progress at one church that includes the system change of the fellowship table layout in its updated service and care procedures. A six-week Bible study, "Made to Crave," was held with eight people attending. The first meeting was face-to-face with the following meetings held via Zoom, a video and audio conferencing system. Eight people completed the course. The NDSU Field to Fork webinar series and the NDSU Healthy Cooking calendars were distributed. The potential impact of the Fellowship Serving Line template will reach not only the church members, but community members who attend funerals and potlucks too.

**Success story:** All four churches have increased the number of healthy choices that are offered at Sunday morning fellowship hour. The healthier choices include serving sliced cheese and crackers, orange slices, apples, string cheese, yogurt, and hard-boiled eggs. The traditional cookies are now placed at the end of the serving line. The churches have noticed they have many cookies leftover each week and that the healthier items are first to disappear. One congregation member stated she is coming back to fellowship time because of the healthier choices that are available. She is a past participant of the Diabetes Prevention Program in Valley City and has appreciated this positive change. After seeing the fresh fruit on the fellowship table, one young mom said, "I have tried to steer my kids away from the fellowship table, but now I am going to rethink this idea!"

**12. City-County Health District, Valley City** **Funds awarded: \$3,250**

**General purpose:** Funds were used to construct a walking path through the Hi Line Prairie Gardens and Community Orchard in Valley City in May 2019.

**Partners:** City-County Health District served as a fiscal partner. The city of Valley City allowed the use of land and provided a donation of mulch. The Valley City State University Fisheries Club and the Valley City Beautification Committees supplied volunteer labor. Hi Line Prairie Gardens and the Community Orchard Steering Committee provided design changes, coordination of activities, funds,



fundraising, education, public relations, volunteer coordination, and volunteer labor.

**Activities complete:** A compacted gravel walking path was constructed, allowing general and

handicapped access to six native species of plants and fruit trees. Extensive engineering and earth moving was required to make sure drainage, elevation and placement of paths and parking pad were completed correctly. A retaining wall extension was also completed to ensure path safety and stability.

**Focus area(s):** Activities and supplies that support and endorse physical activity

**Age ranges of participants:** Ages varied from 13 to more than 65 years old.

**Challenges/barriers:** The project was delayed by weather and obligations to other projects taking precedence. Because of the extensive need for earthwork, the budget was exceeded and plans for one small garden were discarded.



**Success story:** Special needs students who help in the gardens are able to do so with few restrictions due to accessibility from the walking path.

**13. McKenzie County Healthcare Systems, Inc.,  
Watford City Funds awarded: \$3,000**

**General purpose:** McKenzie County Healthcare Systems (MCHS) partnered with MCHS Annual Women’s Day committee to offer a half-day Women’s Health Expo, highlighting topics focused on women’s health.

**Partners:** MCHS served as the overall event sponsor, with E&M Services LLC serving as a co-sponsor of the 5k Fun Run. The MCHS Women's Day Committee planned and organized the event with organizational assistance from the Connie Wold Wellness Center.

**Activities complete:**

- Stop the Bleed classes.
- Public education on colonoscopy screenings.
- Drug abuse.
- Pre-and-post natal exercises.



**Focus area(s):** Activities and events that support and endorse physical activity

**Age ranges of participants:** Ages varied from 13 to more than 65 years old.

**Challenges/barriers:** The largest hurdle was getting community involvement. Last-minute weather changes created an unfriendly environment that likely had a negative effect on attendance.

**Impact measurement:** More than 120 individuals attended the event, with more than 40 people trained and certified in Stop the Bleed, and 100% of event attendees educated on the importance of colonoscopy screenings.

**Success story:** Attendees were able to learn about the new services being offered at MCHS. Through medication management teachings, colonoscopy screenings, and the Stop the Bleed training, lives will be saved both short and long term.