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Department of Safety and Professional Services Announces Three Recipients of Second Round of Youth Firefighter Grants

The grants are designed to help fire departments address recruitment and retention by exposing high school students to opportunities in the fire service.

Madison, Wis. – Department of Safety and Professional Services Secretary-designee Dan Hereth recently announced the three recipients of a grant program that provides funding for youth firefighter training programs. The following are the award winners of the second round of the DPS Youth Firefighter Grant Program in 2022, totaling \$50,000:

- **Edgerton Fire Protection District** will receive \$21,000 toward its program, a partnership with Edgerton High School and Blackhawk Technical College. The program leads to high school juniors and seniors receiving their Firefighter 1 certification, which allows them to advance as a volunteer or start working at the fire station in the Edgerton Fire Protection District internship program. The grant will be used to help provide students with properly fitting turnout gear.
- **Howard-Suamico School District** will receive \$24,950 toward its program. The district will host classes for firefighter certification at Bay Port High School through Northeast Wisconsin Technical College. The program is designed to produce a new generation of paid on-call firefighters for the Howard and Suamico fire departments. The grant will be used to supply students with turnout gear.
- **Nicolet College** will receive \$4,050 for its program that works with Northland Pines High School and the Eagle River Fire Department. The funds will be used for textbooks, costs for practical exam review, tuition for firefighter skills review and Firefighter 1 practical skill exam as students work to earn Firefighter 1 certification.

Recruitment and retention have become key issues for nearly all Wisconsin fire departments but particularly the all-volunteer stations in many rural communities. The Youth Firefighter Grant Program is designed to help address these concerns by exposing high school students to career and volunteer opportunities in the fire service at a time when they are making decisions about their future careers and endeavors.

“This grant will ensure we can continue to offer this program to students in the future to help grow our depleting roster of volunteers in our community,” said Brandon Whitmore, Edgerton Fire Protection District Deputy Chief.

The fire service is a key stakeholder group for DPS. The department [regulates firefighter health and safety](#) and manages the state fire prevention program. It also administers the [2% dues program](#), which distributes funds collected from insurers and matched by the state back to qualifying fire departments.

“We have seen the positive impact from past awards in direct support as well generating ideas and best practices that other communities can model,” Hereth said. “The program also helps draw attention to a critical community safety need.”

In addition to responding to calls, fire departments provide fire prevention education to schools and community groups. They also collaborate extensively with organizations working to support living in place for older adults, and they provide critical demographic housing information and response support during weather emergencies and natural disasters like floods, tornados, and wildfires.

“Fire departments are invaluable community safety partners,” Hereth said. “We are excited to be able to seed these projects to aid in keeping our communities safe.”

About DSPS: The Department of Safety and Professional Services issues more than 240 unique licenses, administers dozens of boards and councils that regulate professions, enforces state building codes, runs the state fire prevention program, and maintains the award-winning Wisconsin Enhanced Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, which is a key tool in the multi-faceted public health campaign to stem excessive opioid prescribing. A fee-based agency, the Department of Safety and Professional Services is self-sustaining and receives no general fund tax dollars for its day-to-day operations. With five offices and 250 employees throughout Wisconsin, DSPS collaborates with constituents and stakeholders across a wide range of industries to promote safety and advance the economy.

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