

**DATE:** February 12, 2026

**MEMO TO:** Elizabeth Hough, Chair  
Preservation Foundation Board

**FROM:** Rebekah Snyder  
Director of Community Engagement & Partnerships

**RECOMMENDATION:** Recommend approval of a \$10,000 grant from unrestricted funds to expand community and volunteer engagement.

**FINANCIAL DATA:** As of December 31, 2025, the Foundation's unrestricted funding total was \$488,961.

The Preservation Foundation Board of Directors has awarded \$202,518 in grants that have not yet been disbursed.

Future Disbursements	Amount
2026	\$121,518
2027	\$25,500
<b>2028 or TBD</b>	\$55,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$202,518</b>

If awarded, \$10,000 will be disbursed the second quarter of 2026.

**BACKGROUND:** As the 501(c)3 charitable partner of the Lake County Forest Preserves, the Preservation Foundation's mission is to extend and accelerate the Lake County Forest Preserves' goals through private philanthropy to restore and preserve Lake County's natural and cultural resources in perpetuity.

In 2013, the Preservation Foundation Board of Directors adopted a policy regarding the use of unrestricted charitable gifts, which created a process for staff to submit an Annual Fund Grant request to support the priorities of the Forest Preserves, such as piloting a new initiative, extending or accelerating existing work, or securing matching funds. To date, the Preservation Foundation has awarded nearly \$1.5 million in grants from unrestricted funds.

In accordance with this policy, a request for a one-year grant in the amount of \$10,000 has been submitted for review and approval at the Preservation Foundation's February 12, 2026 Board of Directors Meeting.

**REVIEW BY OTHERS:** Chief Operations Officer, Director of Administration, Director of Finance, and Forest Preserves Executive Director

**GRANT REQUEST:**

<b>Department</b>	Community Engagement & Partnerships
<b>Project Name</b>	Expand Community and Volunteer Engagement
<b>Project Lead (if not Director)</b>	Norma Zamudio
<b>Total Amount Requested</b>	\$ 10,000
<b>Amount needed per year</b>	
<b>Grant Period</b>	One Year
<b>Grant Purpose</b>	Extend or accelerate an existing project
<b>Project Description</b>	<p>With funding through the Preservation Foundation, in May 2024, District initiated a three-year pilot project, the community engagement program, to increase volunteer recruitment, engagement, and retention. The funding primarily supports a full-time staff member, the community engagement specialist, who focuses on building relationships with current volunteers and District staff who manage volunteer groups, helping lead volunteer workdays, improving training and onboarding new volunteers, and matching individuals and groups with areas of the operations that are most in need of new volunteers.</p> <p>Grant funds will be used to extend the Community Engagement Program by supporting three areas: volunteer safety and public awareness, volunteer stewardship and appreciation, and community engagement and recruitment. Funds will support the purchase of safety supplies and protective gear for volunteers, refreshments and materials for volunteer workdays and appreciation efforts, and outreach supplies for tabling, marketing, and community events.</p> <p><b>Volunteer Identification and Safety - \$6,000</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Branded volunteer apparel (shirts, hats, or vests)</li> <li>• High-visibility vests for stewardship and roadside work</li> <li>• Safety training materials and resources</li> <li>• Safety supplies, including gloves, PPE, first aid kits, and IvyX cleaner, etc.</li> </ul> <p><b>Volunteer Stewardship and Appreciation - \$1,500</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small volunteer appreciation events</li> <li>• Light refreshments for volunteers during group workdays and stewardship activities</li> <li>• Supplies for volunteer orientations and trainings</li> </ul> <p><b>Community Engagement &amp; Volunteer Recruitment - \$2,500</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreach materials (flyers, signage, and promotional materials)</li> <li>• Costs associated with tabling at District and community events</li> <li>• Supplies for tabling, including small giveaways or swag</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruitment materials for volunteer orientations</li> </ul>
<b><i>Project Impact</i></b>	Volunteers support nearly every aspect of the District’s mission, and providing appropriate safety supplies, identification, and engagement resources will improve efficiency, consistency, and risk management. For the community, the project expands access to meaningful volunteer opportunities that connect residents to nature, conservation, and stewardship of public lands. Enhancing the outreach and recruitment efforts will help engage new audiences, including families, community groups, and corporate volunteers, fostering a stronger connection to the Forest Preserves. We want to build strong relationships and encourage continued involvement.
<b><i>Additional Funding</i></b>	<p>The three-year Community Engagement Program is a pilot initiative primarily funded by gifts through the Preservation Foundation, with partial support from the District. Estimated Total Expenses (May 2024 – April 2027): \$296,800</p> <p>Revenues to date:  District share: \$54,315  Raised as of 12/31/2025: \$133,400  To be raised as of 1/1/2026: \$110,000</p> <p>This request would provide additional funding to meet needs identified during the first half of the three-year program.</p>
<b><i>Impact if not funded</i></b>	The project would proceed in a limited capacity without centralized funding. Inconsistency will continue in how volunteers are supported, with some programs able to provide supplies and outreach resources while others cannot due to budget constraints. This limits the ability to offer a safe, equitable, and consistent volunteer experience for all participants. Ensuring all volunteers regardless of department or assignment receive consistent resources and support will help the volunteer program grow.

**PRESERVATION FOUNDATION BOARD:**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  Roll Call Vote: Ayes: \_\_\_\_\_ Nays: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Voice Vote; Majority Ayes: \_\_\_\_\_ Nays: \_\_\_\_\_