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11 groups share grants from Lee Initiatives

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JOHNSTOWN — By PATRICK BUCHNOWSKI

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Eleven organizations in Cambria and Somerset counties on Thursday received a total of \$150,000 in grants.

Lee Initiatives Inc. awarded the grants to fund everything from dental and mental-health programs to caregiver education and firefighting equipment.

The grants were announced at a news conference at the City View restaurant.

“Lee Initiatives gives with a purpose,” Executive Director Anita Faas said. “That purpose is to make our community a healthier and better place to live.”

Since its founding in 2006, Lee Initiatives has given more than \$1 million to community organizations.

“We are living our mission,” Faas said. “A mission of helping our community become better.”

One of the larger recipients was Alternative Community Resources Program, which received a \$27,500 grant.

ACRP Executive Director Frank Janakovic called it a pleasant surprise.

The money will fund a sensory lab for autism and ADHD patients at the former West End Catholic School.

It is part of a broader plan to establish a community center with programs for children and adults, Janakovic said.

“We hope to add this as a building block,” he said.

The 11 grant recipients were whittled down from 37 applicants.

Pitt-Johnstown received a grant of \$20,000 for a caregiver education program.

“There is an urgent need in the community to provide training, support and advocacy for caregivers,” said Janet Grady, director and associated professor for the Pitt-Johnstown nursing program.

Middle Taylor Township Volunteer Fire Company received \$1,000 for safety ropes.

“We can’t buy standard ropes,” firefighter Joe Erb said.

“These are specially designed to hold the weight of the firefighter.”

Goodwill Industries received \$18,495 for its Wellness Recovery Action Plan.

About 14 staff members will be trained to help mental-health patients to “help themselves,” said Ann Torledsky, vice president of workforce development for Goodwill.

“It helps the consumer to understand their symptoms and act in a self-help manner,” she said. “They’re taking responsibility for their own help.”

Last year, Goodwill helped 270 people with mental illness, Torledsky said.

“These organizations will make Greater Johnstown and West Central Pennsylvania a healthier and better place to live,” Faas said.

Lee Initiatives 2010 grant recipients:

- Alternative Community Resource Program: \$27,500, sensory lab for autism and ADHD patients.
- Beginnings Inc., \$7,400, junior board puppet project.
- Church of the Brethren Home, \$985, exercise equipment for stroke victim rehabilitation.
- Goodwill Industries, \$18,495, wellness recovery action plan.
- Greater Johnstown Career and Technology Center, \$7,620, testing fees, pre-clinical testing fees and uniforms.
- Johnstown Free Medical Clinic, \$30,000, mobile dental care equipment and supplies.
- Middle Taylor Township Volunteer Fire Company, \$1,000, rescue equipment.
- Mount Aloysius College, \$10,000, ultrasound equipment.
- New Day Inc., \$20,000, after-school program.
- St. Francis University, \$7,000, asthma camp.
- Pitt-Johnstown, \$20,000, caregiver education program.