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Cedarhurst among recipients of \$15M state grant

MOUNT VERNON - The John R. And Eleanor R. Mitchell Foundation was recently announced as a recipient of grant funding, which will be used to support Cedarhurst Center for the Arts as part of an overall goal to support Illinois tourism.

"Grant funding is highly competitive and we feel very fortunate to be among the list of recipients," said Hillary Esser, Cedarhurst Executive Director. "We are a regional tourism destination and grants like this really help emphasize the importance of our institution on a regional level for the state's tourism industry."

Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO) recently announced \$15 million in funding to support the tourism sector across Illinois, through the second round of the Tourism Attraction and Festivals Grant program offered by the State. Through the \$15 million investment, \$5 million will be reserved for festivals, which serve as economic drivers while bringing communities together, and \$10 million will support a broad range of other tourism-related projects such as attractions, museums, live performance venues and more. This grant is funded using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars.

"When the pandemic struck, the tourism industry across the globe lurched to a standstill," said Governor JB Pritzker in a press release. "That's why, last August, I launched the Tourism Attraction and Festivals Grant program—delivering the support our communities needed to bring back parades, festivals, and cultural celebrations that are so vital to families in neighborhoods across our state. Today, I'm proud to announce an additional \$15 million for this successful program to continue supporting our tourism sector, driving economic development, and bringing our communities together."

Through the grant, the Mitchell foundation will receive \$182,000 to support capital improvements at Cedarhurst Center for the Arts including ADA upgrades, sculpture preservation, and building renovations. Three upcoming projects at Cedarhurst will benefit from the grant.

One is the addition of an accessibility ramp on the Mitchell Museum building's back patio to improve the visitor experience especially during the summer-long Thursday Night Live program as well as people visiting the campus for The Lights, an eight-week holiday program on the Cedarhurst campus that will debut in November 2022.

The second project will assist with the renovation of the courtyard areas that flank the Mitchell Museum building. The renovation goal is to improve the accessibility and visual aesthetics in

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those areas to highlight the prominent sculptures sited directly east and west of the Mitchell Museum building. The courtyard project will start in late summer 2022 after the upgrade of the building's marble exterior.

The bulk of the funding will go to the third project, which is the renovation of the historic Mitchell Home at Cedarhurst. "We are hoping to make the venue more accessible and more inviting for people who may want to rent that space and also for our own public programming," Esser said. "That project will not be completed probably until the end of 2023. We are in the process of making a plan for that space. We are working with an architect, who has experience with historic buildings and structures. Maintaining the historic integrity of that home is very important to us, because that was the home of our founders."

Cedarhurst founders John and Eleanor Mitchell built the home in 1936. The house was designed by Eleanor's father for the couple's 80-acre Mount Vernon estate called Cedarhurst. John Mitchell named the property after the Mitchell ancestral home in Corinth. In 1949 the Mitchells remodeled the home and added the east and west wings, including major expansion and renovations to the kitchen. Today, the Mitchell House is maintained by the museum's operations staff and is used for meetings, special events, and facility rentals. The Mitchell House is not open to the public on a daily basis.

About Cedarhurst Center for the Arts: Opening in 1973, the Mt. Vernon, IL museum and nonprofit celebrates the arts year-round with exciting visual/performing arts, galleries, outdoor sculptures, classes, music, and other special programming. It services the 40 most southern counties in Illinois through its mission to generate enthusiastic participation and support for the arts, and provide opportunities for enjoyment, increased awareness, understanding, and appreciation for the arts.

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