

Grinnell Herald Register
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“Leave It Better Than You Found It” Honoree Named

The Grinnell Lions Club is being honored this year as the winner of the “Leave It Better Than You Found It” program provided by the Claude W. and Dolly Ahrens Foundation. The award this year honors groups or organizations that are making a difference in Grinnell and its surrounding communities. “The Grinnell Lions Club is well deserved of this honor and they are a wonderful and active organization, providing specialized services for our community,” states Julie Gosselink, President and CEO of the Claude W. and Dolly Ahrens Foundation.

The Grinnell Lions Club is purely a volunteer run organization. Founded in 1961, the main goal of Lions International is sight conservation. The Lions of Iowa are very involved in this goal with the Lions Corneal Transplant center at the University of Iowa, sight conservation projects, and their eye glass collection program. Last year, the Grinnell Lions Club received over 700 pair of donated eye glasses from individuals and groups from Grinnell and its surrounding communities. The Grinnell Lions Club is also involved with distributing information on diabetes, a disease related to sight problems.

The motto of the Grinnell Lions Club is “WE SERVE” and over the years its members have been very active in many community activities and projects. A few of their supported activities and causes over the years include: GYBSA, GRMC annual fund drive, Lions Park, Second Mile, Galaxy Youth Center, Relay for Life, Fourth of July fireworks fund, Community Meal, and the Grinnell High School after-prom party. Each year the Grinnell Lions Club awards a \$500.00 scholarship to a Grinnell High School senior to attend a trade school.

One of the major community service projects that the Grinnell Lions Club is involved with is the “Kid Sight” program. Annually, the Grinnell Lions Club participates in a vision screening program at each of the community day care centers and preschools in Grinnell to test the vision of children, ages four and under. With the partnership of the Department of Ophthalmology in Iowa City, these photos are then evaluated to help detect various eye problems, such as; near sightedness, far sightedness, astigmatism, and several others. During their last session, over 250 children in the Grinnell area were screened.

The Claude W. and Dolly Ahrens Foundation invited nominations over the summer for those social, civic, fraternal or community groups who are doing their part to leave the world a better place. The Grinnell Lions Club is being honored with a \$5,000 grant from the Claude W. and Dolly Ahrens Foundation for their outstanding achievements and involvement in the community.

The “Leave It Better Than You Found It” program was initiated in August, 1994, to commemorate the dedication of the Ahrens/Paschall Memorial Park and is funded by the

Claude W. and Dolly Ahrens Foundation. The late Claude W. Ahrens had, in a speech to the National Recreation and Parks Association, challenged those in attendance to follow the sage advice of his father John, "to leave the world a better place than you found it." Colleagues of Ahrens decided to encourage area residents to do the same and the effort was founded. To date, over 300 area individuals, groups and organizations have been honored by the "Leave It Better Than You Found It" program.