

Osoyoos neighbours receive cash to celebrate local community

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Successful applicants for this year's CFSO Neighborhood Small Grants program included Hilary Robertson and Ted Cronmiller, Mike Stiles, Candy Anders, Tamara Morgan, and Arran Balint. The CFSO's Kim English and Osoyoos Mayor Sue McKortoff handed out cheques Friday morning.

Six Osoyoos communities will be partying on someone else's dime — gathering to build neighbourhood, celebrate diversity and even learn new skills.

The Community Foundation of the South Okanagan | Similkameen was in town Friday to hand out cheques to successful applicants to its Neighbourhood Small Grants program.

“It’s really going back to our grassroots,” said grant coordinator Kim English of the program intended to bring small geographic communities together. “Our social groups are really based on similar values. That’s why we don’t know our neighbours as well as we used to — we get in our cars and we drive to our community club or the senior’s centre.

“Neighborhood Small Grants is place-based.”

The program provides up to \$500 in funding for small community block parties. During the spring, applicants share a gathering idea with the foundation, one that promises to connect and engage neighbourhood residents, share residents’ skills and knowledge, build a sense of ownership and pride or respect and celebrate diversity.

A project must be free and welcoming to all.

About 40 of the 50 applications this year fell within the program’s criteria, said Ms. English. Thirty of those were awarded grants, including six gatherings in Osoyoos.

Those gatherings include a block party on Quail Place, get-to-know-you barbecues in Quail Ridge and Casa del Sol and a playground-planning party in Dividend Ridge.

Members of the Anarchist Mountain community plan to gather to talk about a parade float in this year’s Cherry Fiesta. On Spartan Drive, following a successful meet-and-greet last year, neighbours have invited the community paramedic to come teach CPR and AED skills.

The foundation likes to see ongoing gatherings, said Ms. English, although it does expect a progression from introductions to local project.

“If you’re going to do a continual application, we want to see that progress,” she explained. “You build on the idea. You do a meet-and-greet the first year and then the second year you figure out what you want to tackle next.”

The foundation wrapped up its intake for the 2018 class of projects in May; another round of grant applications is planned for next February.

Meanwhile, the foundation is asking Osoyoos residents to provide input on how their community is faring on 11 different issues. The [Vital Signs survey](#) is now available online.

The survey takes about 10 minutes to complete. The CFSO is hoping to get about 8,000 submissions from across the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen. Those participating will be entered in a draw for up to eight \$100 gift certificates to a store of their choosing.