

BLACK HAWK COUNTY

Gaming  
Association



# Annual Report

FY26



More than \$88 million reinvested into the Cedar Valley since 2007.

The Black Hawk County Gaming Association Board of Directors generously contribute their collective time, knowledge, and leadership to advance our mission.



**Melanie Knipp**  
President



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Vice President



**John Huff**  
Secretary



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**Oksana Grybovykh  
Hafermann**



**Chiquita Loveless**



**Brian Schoon**



**Eric Ritland**



**Mike Tyer**



**LeKeisha Veasley**

“

We recognize the tremendous work being done by public and nonprofit organizations in our region. BHC GA is proud to partner with many to create positive change throughout Northeast Iowa and build stronger communities for future generations.

Melanie Knipp – President, Black Hawk County Gaming Association

”

## Letter from the Executive Director

As we reflect on Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26), the Black Hawk County Gaming Association (BHC GA) is filled with gratitude for the organizations, community leaders, local governments, and residents who give their time, talent, and vision in the Cedar Valley.

This year, BHC GA continued its commitment to “helping the Cedar Valley prosper” by strategically investing over \$5.7 million in projects that strengthen our communities and improve quality of life in Northeast Iowa. From expanding nonprofit services to enhancing public spaces and increasing property tax relief, our grants are designed to create lasting benefits for current and future generations.

Economic development remains a critical priority for our region. Strong communities require strong infrastructure, vibrant neighborhoods, accessible services, and opportunities that attract and retain residents, workers, and businesses. BHC GA continues to invest in places, spaces, and initiatives that help make Northeast Iowa a destination for opportunity.

The impact of our grants extends far beyond individual organizations and projects. Each represents a partnership with organizations that are working every day to address community needs and strengthen local assets.

As we look to the future, BHC GA remains optimistic about the possibilities ahead. Northeast Iowa has a long history of innovation, collaboration, and perseverance. By collaborating on visionary projects and community-driven solutions, we can continue building a stronger region.

Thank you to the Isle Casino Hotel Waterloo and the many community leaders who make our work possible. Most importantly, thank you to the people of Northeast Iowa. It is an honor to serve this community, and we look forward to continuing our work together!

*Emily Hanson*

**Emily Hanson**  
Executive Director, BHC GA

**Emily Hanson**, Executive Director (left)  
**Sarah Craft**, Grant Coordinator (right)



“

The best part of this work is seeing what can happen when communities come together with a shared vision for the future.

Emily Hanson

”



# Helping the Cedar Valley prosper.

## Impact Snapshot

### FY26 Funding

Total dollars awarded:  
**\$5,701,500**

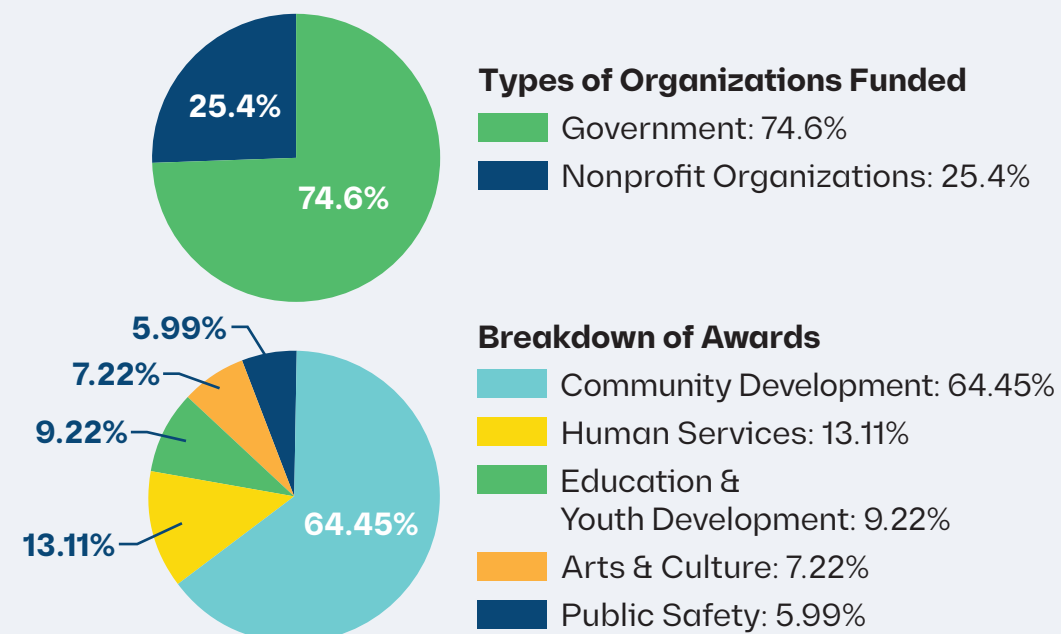
» Awards approved: **34**

**48%**  
of LOIs submitted received funding.

Number of cities awarded funds:  
**9**

Dollars awarded from FY26 competitive cycles: **\$1,955,042**

### Historical Funding FY08-FY26



Total dollars reinvested in the Cedar Valley from BHCGA: **\$88,783,647**

Total number of legacy grants funded: **42**

Total number of grants awarded since 2008: **753**

Average grant size FY08-FY26: **\$120,690**

The Black Hawk County Gaming Association Board of Directors approved the following grants during our competitive grant cycles between July 1, 2025, and June 30, 2026.

**Congratulations to all of our grant partners!**



**Each grant cycle includes four stages:**

Letter of intent



Application



Evaluation



Decision



To learn more about our grant cycles, visit [bhcga.org](https://bhcga.org).

| Recipient Name                             | Project                                         | Amount      |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Hawkeye Community College                  | Butler Hall Renovation                          | \$1,000,000 |
| Grout Museum District                      | Director of Development                         | \$200,000   |
| Boys and Girls Club of the Cedar Valley    | Lime St Club Restroom Modernization             | \$100,000   |
| UnityPoint Health - Allen Hospital         | Child Protection Center Expansion               | \$100,000   |
| Peoples Clinic                             | Dental Clinic Renovation                        | \$100,000   |
| Link CCD                                   | Walnut Neighborhood Park Playground             | \$50,000    |
| Exceptional Persons, Inc.                  | Low Income Housing Renovation                   | \$50,000    |
| City of Sumner                             | Sumner Trail Enhancement                        | \$50,000    |
| Friends of the Waterloo Library            | Automated Sorter & Self-Check Machines          | \$50,000    |
| City of Elk Run Heights                    | Pickleball Courts                               | \$35,000    |
| Clarksville Food Pantry                    | Renovating for the Future                       | \$25,000    |
| Sumner Daycare                             | Childcare Playground                            | \$25,000    |
| The Job Foundation                         | Rename and Rebrand                              | \$20,000    |
| Cedar Valley Arboretum & Botanical Gardens | Illuminate the Gardens                          | \$20,000    |
| City of La Porte City                      | Library Renovation Project                      | \$20,000    |
| Joyful Noise Daycare                       | Playground Resurfacing                          | \$20,000    |
| North Star Community Services              | Providing Accessible Transportation             | \$19,474    |
| Americans for Independent Living           | Honor and Access Facility Upgrades              | \$15,000    |
| Gladbrook-Reinbeck Schools PTO             | Elementary Playground                           | \$15,000    |
| Iowa Legal Aid                             | Technology Upgrades to Improve Service Delivery | \$10,568    |
| Friends of Community Memorial Hospital     | Patient Monitoring System                       | \$10,000    |
| Cedar Valley Youth Sports Foundation       | Playground                                      | \$10,000    |
| Highland Historic Neighborhood             | Street Light Repair                             | \$10,000    |

**Total Competitive Grants Awarded in FY26:**

**\$1,955,042**

# Award Spotlights FY26

## » Grout Museum District \$200,000

### Making a Plan for the Future

After the loss of a voter-approved levy which represented 44% of their operating budget, the Grout Museum needed to replace lost public funding with private support. With grant help, they hired a full-time **Director of Development** to rebuild professional fundraising capacity and stabilize the organization's finances. Their goal is for the funding for the role to be self-sustaining after three years of support from this capacity-building grant.

The new position will establish systems, skills, and diversified revenue streams that ensure long-term sustainability and responsible stewardship of community assets. It will enable the Grout Museum to continue operating as a community anchor and a statewide cultural resource, collaborating with schools, libraries, veteran organizations, arts groups, and community partners to showcase local history, hands-on science education, and a veterans museum.



“The support of the Black Hawk County Gaming Association comes at a pivotal moment for the Grout Museum District. This investment positions us to strengthen the financial infrastructure our community's cultural heritage deserves.”  
Margaret Moye – Executive Director, Grout Museum



## » Hawkeye Community College \$1,000,000 Cutting-Edge Education

Butler Hall is home to many of Hawkeye Community College's skilled trades programs, which are helping to fill a nationwide shortage of workers. The **Butler Hall Renovation** will expand Hawkeye's program offerings, meet the needs of a growing student population, and support a modern, hands-on learning environment. It will align classroom instruction with current industry practices, mirroring real-world work settings and adding contemporary, state-of-the-art equipment for a safer learning environment. Renovating Butler Hall is not only a facilities upgrade; it is an essential step toward meeting regional labor market needs and improving long-term economic resilience.

“BHCGA's generous investment is a game-changer for us and the students we serve. We're deeply grateful for a partner who believes, as we do, that a strong workforce starts with a strong education.”  
Lynn LaGrone –  
Provost & Vice President  
of Academic Affairs,  
Hawkeye Community  
College

# Award Spotlights



## » UnityPoint Health - Allen Hospital

\$100,000

### Creating Better Care for Children

The goal of the **Allen Child Protection Center Expansion** is to provide a well-designed, child-centered safe space for Black Hawk County children and dependent adults who are suspected victims of abuse or witnesses to crime. The new facility, an existing building on the Allen College campus, will provide space for an additional interview/observation suite along with larger exam rooms and an expanded waiting area for better privacy, safety, and trauma mitigation. Additionally, it will provide better workspaces for partners including law enforcement, Iowa Health and Human Services, prosecutors, and others to more readily hold perpetrators accountable.

“

The Allen Child Protection Center provides services to our most vulnerable and important resources: children. BHCGA’s generous contribution to support the center’s critical need for a larger and better suited facility demonstrates their shared commitment to the future we all want for children in our community.

”

Katie Strub – Sr. Clinic Administrator, Allen Child Protection Center



## » City of La Porte City

\$20,000

### Expanding Access to Knowledge

The La Porte City Public Library underwent a complete rejuvenation of the interior spaces to better meet the current and future needs of the community. The **library renovation project** improved accessibility and added a study room and a meeting room, which will double as a space to offer programs for all ages and provide opportunities for community organizations to gather and host events. In addition to new furniture and shelving space, they also expanded their collection, adding unique items in their Library of Things and more computer power, as requested by the community. This renovation transformed La Porte City Public Library into a modern, adaptable, and enduring hub of learning, creativity, and connection for generations to come.



## » City of Sumner

\$50,000

### Making Concrete Connections

The trail in Sumner was in need of repair and reconnection between City Park and Cub Park. Some of the asphalt on the old trail had deteriorated and one section was completely broken and unusable. With the grant award, Sumner completed their **Trail Enhancement Project**, installing a new concrete trail that reconnects to the 120 miles of the Cedar Valley Nature Trail system and provides residents more safe paths for outdoor recreation.



## Friends of Community Memorial Hospital

\$10,000

### Patient Monitoring System

Community Memorial Hospital in Sumner purchased a **Patient Monitoring System**, allowing nurses to watch the vital signs of up to 16 patients from the nurses’ station. By giving patients longer periods of uninterrupted rest and enabling nurses to respond immediately to any changes, this system helps provide safer, more compassionate care for every patient.



## Americans for Independent Living

\$15,000

### Facility Upgrades

AFIL made **facility upgrades to improve building access and honor veterans**. This included replacing cracked concrete, constructing a new handicap accessible entryway, commissioning patriotic murals, installing flagpoles to represent each branch of the United States military, and installing new lighting, all to improve their ability to assist veterans in need.



## Cedar Valley Arboretum & Botanical Gardens

\$20,000

### Light Shows

By **illuminating the gardens**, the Arboretum hopes to increase tourism and expand the season beyond their usual closing date. The project included the addition of pathway lighting and infrastructure to create light shows that will allow visitors to safely explore the Arboretum and provide entertainment and recreation for families during the winter.



## City of Elk Run Heights

\$35,000

### Pickleball Courts

Based on feedback from residents, the City applied for a grant to replace an old, unused tennis court with two new **pickleball courts** and bleachers. The new courts improve the city’s access to pickleball, providing an additional local opportunity for residents of all ages to be active outside and creating an increased sense of community.

# Legacy Grants

The Black Hawk County Gaming Association has historically prioritized transforming places and spaces in Northeast Iowa by strategically investing in large, capital projects that enhance local infrastructure. We classify awards of \$500,000 or more as **Legacy Grants**.



Total Legacy Grant Funding Since 2007:

# \$56.9 million

|                                                                      |             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| City of Waterloo - Cedar Valley Sportsplex*                          | \$8,000,000 |
| Waterloo Development Corporation - Hard Courts Facility*             | \$7,000,000 |
| City of Waterloo - Gates and Byrnes Parks Transformation             | \$6,500,000 |
| City of Waterloo - Riverloop Expo                                    | \$2,800,000 |
| Iowa Heartland Habitat for Humanity - Walnut Neighborhood            | \$1,900,000 |
| City of Waterloo - 4th Street Bridge Restoration*                    | \$1,800,000 |
| City of Cedar Falls - Cedar River Recreation                         | \$1,500,000 |
| City of Waterloo - Jefferson/Commercial Streetscape*                 | \$1,400,000 |
| YWCA - Building Renovations                                          | \$1,200,000 |
| Hartman Reserve - Interpretive Center                                | \$1,200,000 |
| Black Hawk County - E911 Radio Project                               | \$1,000,000 |
| Grout Museum - Sullivan Brothers Iowa Veterans Museum                | \$1,000,000 |
| Northeast Iowa Food Bank - New Facility                              | \$1,000,000 |
| City of Waterloo - Public Works Building                             | \$1,000,000 |
| Hawkeye Community College - Van G. Miller Adult Education Center     | \$1,000,000 |
| University of Northern Iowa - UNI Dome                               | \$1,000,000 |
| Iowa Heartland Habitat for Humanity - Strategic Giving Initiative    | \$1,000,000 |
| Northeast Iowa Food Bank - From Hunger to Hope Capital Campaign      | \$1,000,000 |
| Hawkeye Community College - Butler Hall Renovation                   | \$1,000,000 |
| City of Waterloo - Riverfront Stadium Improvements*                  | \$930,000   |
| Operation Threshold - New Facility                                   | \$850,000   |
| City of Waterloo - Mark's Park and Amphitheater                      | \$823,000   |
| City of Waterloo - Convention Center                                 | \$820,000   |
| Black Hawk Grundy Mental Health Center - Facility Improvements       | \$750,000   |
| City of Waterloo - University Avenue Enhancements                    | \$750,000   |
| La Porte City - Main Street Redevelopment                            | \$750,000   |
| City of Cedar Falls - Public Safety Building                         | \$750,000   |
| City of Cedar Falls - Streetscape Phase 1                            | \$743,000   |
| City of Waterloo - Byrnes Park Drainage Project                      | \$642,000   |
| City of Waterloo - Young Arena Improvements                          | \$600,000   |
| City of Waterloo - Lincoln Park Improvements                         | \$600,000   |
| City of Cedar Falls - Details of the District Phase 2                | \$574,800   |
| Build Our Ballparks - Cedar River Youth Sports Complex               | \$500,000   |
| City of Waterloo - Waterloo Center for the Arts Youth Pavilion       | \$500,000   |
| University of Northern Iowa - Dome New Turf                          | \$500,000   |
| University of Northern Iowa - Dome Scoreboard                        | \$500,000   |
| City of Cedar Falls, UNI, Cedar Falls Schools - Tennis Complex       | \$500,000   |
| City of Waterloo - Boat House Enhancements                           | \$500,000   |
| Peoples Community Health Clinic - Capital Project                    | \$500,000   |
| Hawkeye Community College - Smart Automatic Training Alliance Center | \$500,000   |
| City of Cedar Falls - Community Natatorium                           | \$500,000   |
| House of Hope - Empowerment Center                                   | \$500,000   |

\* Funding awarded through competitive grant cycle and/or Downtown Waterloo Reserves.

# Outgoing Board Member Grants

To recognize individuals who serve as volunteers on the BHCGA Board of Directors, outgoing members are able to make a grant to a local cause of their choice. In FY26, we would like to recognize these outstanding individuals for their contributions through their work with BHCGA and beyond in the Cedar Valley.



## Kingsley Botchway

Designated grant to North End Cultural Center, Inc.



## Eric Ritland

Designated grant to Youth Art Team



## Jane Whittlesey

Designated grant to La Porte City - Public Art

# Statement of Financial Position

Since our founding in 2007, the Black Hawk County Gaming Association has awarded over \$88 million to 753 projects in 8 counties and 55 cities.

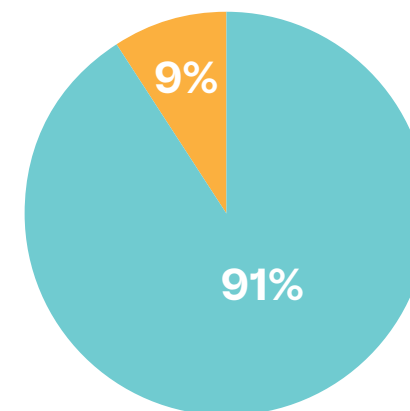
## Assets FY26

|                                 |                     |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| Cash and cash equivalents:      | \$5,647,969         |
| Certificates of Deposit:        | \$6,110,244         |
| Investments held at WCF:        | \$5,679,868         |
| Accounts Receivable:            | \$134,390           |
| Net Leasehold Improvements:     | \$21,378            |
| Right-of-use - Operating Lease: | \$81,941            |
| <b>Total Assets:</b>            | <b>\$17,675,790</b> |

## Liabilities & Net Assets

|                                        |                     |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Grants Payable:                        | \$8,126,967         |
| Operating Lease Liability:             | \$81,941            |
| <b>Total Liabilities:</b>              | <b>\$8,208,908</b>  |
| Net Assets, Unrestricted:              | \$7,343,144         |
| Board Designated Reserve - WDC:        | \$2,123,738         |
| <b>Total New Assets:</b>               | <b>\$9,466,882</b>  |
| <b>Total Liabilities &amp; Assets:</b> | <b>\$17,675,790</b> |

Audit provided 8/2026 by BerganKDV



## Types of Grants by Amount Awarded

- Capital Grants: 91%
- Capacity Building: 9%





114 E 4th Street, Suite 300  
Waterloo, IA 50703  
[bhcca.org](http://bhcca.org)

## Award Spotlight



### » Friends of the Waterloo Library \$50,000

#### Lending a Hand to Those Who Lend Books

The Waterloo Public Library replaced outdated, unreliable systems with a new **automated sorter and self-check machines**. The upgrade also included new security gates, allowing easier access for patrons needing mobility-assisting carts and devices. Self-checkout for patrons provides a level of privacy and allows library staff to spend time in more complex patron assistance interactions, program preparation and delivery, and outreach efforts to take library services across the community. Newer, more efficient equipment minimizes service disruptions and improves patron satisfaction. By investing in reliable circulation technology, the library will be better positioned to support lifelong learning, digital equity, and community engagement. These strategic improvements contribute to a stronger, more connected, and better-served Greater Cedar Valley region.

« Open for more impact