

NEWS RELEASE

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July 16, 2021

Alberta Blue Cross® grant program supports rural and remote communities through COVID-19

With hope for an end to the pandemic now in sight, Alberta Blue Cross is reporting back to Albertans on the high level of interest and participation in its popular COVID Community Roots Program.

The program was introduced in 2020 to support services in rural and remote communities through the pandemic and was extended to June 2021 based on demand. Through the program, Alberta Blue Cross provided grants of up to \$5,000 for grassroots, community-led initiatives serving vulnerable populations. The program was administered in partnership with the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association and Communities Choosewell, who helped to promote the program and review applications.

By the time the program wrapped up, Alberta Blue Cross received 219 applications and awarded a total of \$262,000 to 59 projects across Alberta. The program provided support for a wide variety of projects including the following:

- Community gardens and programs in communities like Redwood Meadows and the Town of Strathmore, as well as a youth gardening program in Foothills run by Agriculture for Life Inc. Some community garden projects will help to address food security, like the Community Outreach Program Enhancement in Grande Cache, and offset increased demand of the foodbank, like in the Village of Donalda.
- Lending libraries such as the Exshaw Library Society BIN-GENIOUS project where community members can sign out themed bins of library materials or the Mary C. Moore Public Library where Lacombe residents can access gardening books and workshops, take-home gardening kits and a seed library. Other communities, such as The Rimbey Neighbourhood Place Society in Ponoka County and the Town of Vulcan, are giving individuals the opportunity to borrow equipment for crafts, outdoor games and activities.
- Outdoor programs, such as those led by staff of the Edson LEAP Society to support families, and activities, like yoga in the park and distanced sing-alongs in the Town of Hanna.
- Initiatives to ensure compliance with enhanced COVID-19 safety measures, such as supplies and equipment for the Fort McKay First Nation to start up programs and camps run by local community members, and chairs and sanitation products for the 4 Wings Military Family Resource Centre Society to enable it to safely open its resource centre, which serves military families and other residents of the Cold Lake area.
- Virtual workshops and educational programs run by organizations such as Thorsby Family and Community Support Services and Vegreville and District Family and Community Support Services.

See a complete list of funded projects at ab.bluecross.ca/aboutus/community-roots-funded-projects.php.

“These projects have been a huge boost to support the social, mental, emotional and physical well-being of people and communities across Alberta through the pandemic,” says Brian Geislinger, vice-president of Corporate Relations, Alberta Blue Cross. “We’re so glad to be able to support these initiatives.”

Funding for the COVID Community Roots Program was provided through the Alberta Blue Cross community foundation.

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