



Mary Chilton DAR Foundation Awards Grants to Five SD Organizations Now Accepting Applications for \$50,000 Dorothy Day Davenport Grant

SIoux FALLS, SD – FEB. 8, 2023 – The Mary Chilton Daughters of the American Revolution Foundation has awarded five grants worth almost \$65,000 to charitable organizations in Sioux Falls, Pierre and De Smet.

The grants were awarded to the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation in Pierre, the Laura Ingalls Wilder Memorial Society in De Smet, the Mary Jo Wegner Arboretum and East Sioux Falls Historic Site in Sioux Falls, the American Legion Auxiliary SD Unit 15 in Sioux Falls and McCrossan Boys Ranch in Sioux Falls.

“We are so impressed by the different projects that these organizations are involved with,” DAR grants committee chairperson Tammy Noordermeer said. “We are reaching different parts of the state, from Pierre, to De Smet to the Sioux Falls area. We love getting the word out about the grant opportunities that we have.”

The Mary Chilton DAR Chapter will award a \$50,000 grant later this year for a Sioux Falls tax-exempt, nonprofit or civic organization to use toward their historic preservation, education or patriotism project. The two previous winners of the annual grant were the Tuthill House Restoration Project and the State Theater. Applicants can apply and see more information at dar-marychiltonfoundation.org. The DAR Foundation awards grants from \$1,000 to \$15,000 three times a year and grants up to \$1,000 every two months.

The first grants of 2023 will be used to produce and print the latest Laura Ingalls Wilder “Pioneer Girl” book, fund a new display of artwork for the Laura Ingalls Wilder Memorial Society in De Smet, create an interactive history plaza celebrating East Sioux Falls and the railroad/mining history at the Mary Jo Wegner Arboretum, send 55 girls from Sioux Falls to Girls State and restore four historic wagons and buggies at McCrossan Boys Ranch.

Here's more about all five grants and what each organization will be doing with its funds:

South Dakota Historical Society Foundation (\$15,000)

The fourth edition of the Laura Ingalls Wilder “Pioneer Girl” series will be published this spring, and the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation is using its grant to help pay for design, printing and marketing 2,000 copies of the book’s first run.

The first edition of “Pioneer Girl” was released in 2014 and has since sold more than 190,000 copies. The fourth edition, “Pioneer Girl: The Path Into Fiction,” analyzes Wilder’s transition from nonfiction to fiction writer by taking a closer look at the editorial process of both Wilder and her daughter Rose Wilder Lane ahead of the first book in the Little House series, “Little House in the Big Woods.”

Pre-orders for the book can be placed starting March 15 at sdhspress.com.

“The grant shows the power of Laura Ingalls Wilder and her stories. It’s geared toward stories that are essentially American,” said Dedra Birzer, director of the South Dakota Historical Society press. “So many people have fallen in love with the story. That is the picture of the American life that a lot of non-Americans have.”

Laura Ingalls Wilder Memorial Society (\$14,843)

For a generation of readers, Garth Williams’ illustrations in the Little House on the Prairie books are synonymous with Ingalls Wilder’s story. The Laura Ingalls Wilder Memorial Society has more than 60 pieces of original artwork from Williams that illustrated the books starting in the 1950s. The drawings are on parchment slightly smaller than a traditional piece of paper, Memorial Society Executive Director Josiah Wright said.

The organization, which is based in De Smet, will use the grant to fund exhibit cases and cubes so that people visiting Laura Ingalls Wilder Historic Homes in De Smet can see them as part of the 70th anniversary of the illustrations first being used in the books. The temporary exhibit will be displayed from Memorial Day through Labor Day with the plan to have some of the illustrations on display permanently.

The images have been in the Memorial Society’s collection since 2011 but could not have been properly displayed in their entirety until now, Wright said.

“This grant is going to help a lot,” Wright said. “Before, we only had five of these cubes and we only had a couple of display cases that we felt comfortable with. But with this grant, we will be far more confident in displaying these images than we were before.”

Mary Jo Wegner Arboretum and East Sioux Falls Historic Site (\$15,000)

The Mary Jo Arboretum in eastern Sioux Falls is celebrating the mining and railroad history of the East Sioux Falls townsite with an outdoor interactive exhibit. The grant from DAR will be used to help pay for materials and installation of interpretive signs in the plaza area.

The exhibit, which is also being funded by the City of Sioux Falls, will replicate the historic Illinois Central Railroad that used to be a part of the site and feature interactive areas that help visitors learn about the location’s mining and railroad past.

Executive Director Mike Cooper said the display will have play features, old quartzite stone, railroad amenities and possibly an old section of railroad track and a cart. The plaza will be toward the front of the Arboretum along Highway 42, an area close to the original depot location.

DAR has provided grants to the arboretum before, including a recent grant that created a trail guide.

“We are really excited about adding the plaza as another feature to the arboretum site. People are very interested in the history of east Sioux Falls as well as the railroad and mining aspects that

were vital to that history. We have a very good relationship with DAR with other grants. We want to continue on with this one.”

McCrossan Boys Ranch (\$15,000)

McCrossan Boys Ranch, a home for at-risk youth in Sioux Falls, is using its grant to repair and restore four vehicles in its collection.

The first is a hitch wagon that the organization has used in four presidential inauguration parades, most recently for President Obama in 2009.

Visitor Center coordinator Sarah Burman said the most unique restoration will be a honeymoon buggy that was donated to the facility. Burman said the buggy was used once in 1913 or 1914 by a Sioux Falls couple and sat in a barn for almost 100 years. The wheels need to be restored and the buggy needs a new coat of paint.

The two other vehicles being restored are a doctor’s buggy as well as an old hitch wagon that was used for hauling freight between towns. Three of the vehicles will be displayed at the McCrossan Boys Ranch for the public to view.

“We are very excited for this grant,” Burman said. “Without it, we would not be able to move forward with this restoration project. We are very thankful to the Mary Chilton DAR Foundation for the grant as well.”

American Legion Auxiliary SD Unit 15 (\$5,000)

The ALA based in Sioux Falls will use its \$5,000 grant to send 55 girls to Girls State from May 29 to June 3 at the University of South Dakota.

Girls State is a week-long gathering of more than 400 high school girls to learn about citizenship and processes of city, county and state government.

About Dorothy Day Davenport and The Mary Chilton DAR Chapter and Mary Chilton DAR Foundation:

Dorothy Day Davenport was an original founding member in 1915 of the local Mary Chilton Chapter of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (NSDAR), a charitable organization established in 1890 to promote historic preservation, education, and patriotism. Members have an ancestral connection to men and women who had a patriotic role in the American Revolution. Dorothy Day Davenport was a member of the Board of Directors of the Sioux Falls Argus Leader and served as its President. Mrs. Davenport’s bequest to the Mary Chilton Chapter made possible the formation of its Foundation in 1987. The foundation administers grants and awards funds provided by her gift.

Since 1987, the Mary Chilton DAR Foundation has made over 500 grant awards totaling in excess of \$3 million. These awards have made a significant impact through community and statewide initiatives, helping preserve South Dakota’s pioneer spirit, and democratic past, honoring veterans, and expanding educational horizons. Grant awards have been made to non-profit and civic organization projects and for educational programs, first-year teacher grants, and scholarships in Sioux Falls and South Dakota.

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