

Foundation comes up with big money to help Anchorage parks

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ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) - A foundation has come up with money to spruce up Anchorage's parks after voters recently rejected several bond proposals.

Twenty-six community groups will receive grants totaling \$400,000 from the Rasmuson Foundation. The city-sponsored Anchorage Park Foundation, formed to raise private funds for city parks, is managing the grant program. Each individual award could be for up to \$40,000.

The grant winners had to raise an equal amount to match the foundation money, but they did better than that, the city announced. They came up with more than \$800,000 in labor, materials and cash.

A citizens group whose members plant trees, Anchorage Treerific, got \$5,000 in cash and \$10,000 in plant materials to do its thing. The tree club replanted native birch and spruce on a hillside at Abbott Loop Park after old trees were taken out to build baseball fields there, said Nickel LaFleur and Patricia Joyner of Treerific.

"We're trying to make it pretty again," LaFleur said.

In West Anchorage, Turnagain neighbors and an Eagle Scout, Cameron Sordahl, will put a new fence in and otherwise fix up a park called Didlika on McKenzie Drive near Northern Lights Boulevard with a \$20,000 grant.

The Friends of Didlika formed "because we could never get any bonds passed," said Candice English.

No park bonds for the Anchorage Bowl have been approved by voters since 2001.

The friends have formed work parties and put in flowers for years, English said. A dozen or so families are listed as participants.

Ed Rasmuson, chairman of the Alaska philanthropic organization, also referred to the failures of city parks bonds. He said that in offering these grants, the foundation wanted to see whether Anchorage residents would contribute to parks in a different way.

"Frankly, if it's this successful, we'll keep on doing it," Rasmuson said.

Information from: Anchorage Daily News, <http://www.adn.com>