



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Houghton Middle School Awarded \$5,000 from the Portage Health Foundation for a School Garden & Greenhouse Project

[Hancock, MI] The Portage Health Foundation awarded \$5,000 to the Houghton Middle School to assist with the construction costs of a garden and greenhouse on the school's campus.

PHF is committed to helping area students, residents, and visitors lead healthy and meaningful lives. Through the construction of a greenhouse and garden on the school's campus, students will have the opportunity to expand their classrooms to the outdoors in order to learn about the sciences and economics of gardening as well as to provide food for the district's food program.

With expanding awareness about the benefits of healthy eating, Houghton Middle School's greenhouse project encourages students to take an active part in planting, growing, and harvesting garden produce. According to Houghton Middle School teacher, Sarah Geborkoff, "This project means a lot to the district. It will help bring students of all ages together for a common purpose, increase community and parent involvement at our facility, add more opportunities for hands-on learning for all middle school and high school students, and add fresh, locally grown produce to our district food program. Students learn best through 'doing', and the greenhouse and garden project will enable students to 'do' a lot!"

One of PHF's granting initiatives is to improve food security rates throughout Baraga, Houghton, Keweenaw, and Ontonagon counties. Food security occurs when all people, at all times, have reliable access to adequate amounts of affordable and nutritious food in order to support an active and healthy life. According to the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization, food security is a complex issue and rests on four pillars: (1) food availability—having consistent and sufficient access to food; (2) food access—having sufficient resources to procure food for a nutritious diet; (3) food use—having the appropriate use that is based on the knowledge of basic nutrition and care as well as adequate water and sanitation; and (4) food stability—having the ability to obtain food over time. Food insecurity, as specified by the USDA, occurs when lack of money and other resources affect consistent access to adequate food during the year. In 2014, Feeding America demonstrated that the overall food insecurity rates in Baraga, Houghton, Keweenaw, and Ontonagon counties were 16.8%, 15.7%, 14.7%, and 14.8%, respectively. These percentages indicate that there is a critical need to make certain all residents are food secure.

Hilary Anderson, Grants Management Coordinator at PHF, states, "The Houghton Middle School garden and greenhouse project provides students and faculty the opportunity to learn about healthy and nutritious food and offers additional food security measures for the school. This grant also serves as a pilot study to help PHF understand what role we can play in ensuring all area residents are food secure."

The Portage Health Foundation is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization that receives and contributes charitable donations in order to support the health needs of the community through enhanced philanthropy and community collaboration in Baraga, Houghton, Keweenaw, and Ontonagon counties.

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