



2026 Voter's Pamphlet

Women Investing in Shepherd (WISH) is a women's giving circle sponsored by the Shepherd University Foundation.

WISH inspires, educates, and develops the amazing potential of women's philanthropy. Our high-impact grants to Shepherd University and our tri-state community affect positive changes, bring new funding resources, and make philanthropy accessible.

Please use this pamphlet to inform how you vote for the 2026 WISH grantees. Your vote is due no later than August 5, 2026.

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July 22, 2026

Dear WISH Member,

We are thrilled to present the finalists for the 2026 Women Investing in Shepherd grants. Our voting results will determine the four projects that receive funding this year. Your vote will be included if it is received by **Wednesday, August 5, 2026**.

IMPORTANCE OF VOTING

The ballot represents an opportunity for each of us to leverage our individual contribution into a combined grant pool of \$146,500, creating a significant impact for Shepherd University and our tri-state community. Please take time to reflect on the projects under consideration and exercise the privilege of voting. The finalists represent the myriad of needs within our regional community and at the University. They were selected by the 2026 Grant Committee to propose the best solutions to those needs. Receiving a completed ballot from each of you ensures that our grant recipients reflect the preferences of our entire membership for where our funds will have the greatest impact.

HOW THE FINALISTS WERE SELECTED

The Grant Committee, co-chaired by Carol Kable and Harriet Pearson, deserve our thanks for the intelligence, commitment, and rigor they have brought to this process. Fifteen voting members have collaborated to select the finalists presented here. Their efforts include: reviewing 36 letters of inquiry and analyzing each in depth to narrow down to 20 full proposal invitations; inviting 15 of these (5 Shepherd and 10 nonprofits) to receive on-site visits; and further narrowing this group to 3 Shepherd projects and 4 nonprofit projects to appear on the ballot. The full grant committee met three times, and sub-teams conducted site visits to complete this important work on behalf of WISH.

Projects that demonstrated one or more of the following WISH criteria were considered:

- Responses to urgent and critical needs;
- Bold new ventures; and/or,
- New approaches to ongoing problems.

In addition, the Grant Committee members used the following questions to guide their research:

- What impact will a grant of \$36,625 have?
- What makes this proposal compelling?



NOW IT'S YOUR TURN!

This voter's pamphlet provides summary information on seven proposals, four from community nonprofits and three from Shepherd University. As described before, members of the Grant Committee met with leaders and champions for each project. It was determined through the site visits that these are the seven best proposals for your consideration.

Please remember that two University projects and two nonprofit projects will receive a grant. You are encouraged to vote for the full number in each category. For more information on any of these projects, including the opportunity to review the submitted proposals, please contact Meg Patterson at mpeterso@shepherd.edu or 304-876-5021, or visit:

shepherduniversityfoundation.org/wishgrantvotingportal

Please see the ballot for additional information on submitting your vote by **Wednesday, August 5.**

CELEBRATE!

We will announce the WISH grant recipients at a special celebration at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, September 23, 2026 at Erma Ora Byrd Hall on Shepherd's campus in Shepherdstown, WV. Please plan to join us. It promises to be a very exciting occasion! Invitations will be mailed in August. We look forward to seeing each and every one of you there!

Best regards,

Carolyn Fleenor
Advisory Committee

Bev Hughes
Advisory Committee

Liz Oates
Advisory Committee

Peachy Staley
Advisory Committee

Community Nonprofits

COMMUNITY MARKETS

Local Food Access Delivery Program

REQUESTED WISH FUNDING: \$36,625

www.communitymarketsinc.org

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Community Markets Inc. (CMI) launched the Local Food Access Delivery Program in 2026 to address barriers to food access faced by underserved communities across West Virginia. Many individuals experiencing food insecurity lack reliable transportation or are homebound due to age, disability, or chronic conditions. This limits their ability to access fresh, healthy food. Support from WISH will enable CMI to purchase a refrigerated van, which is an investment that will expand delivery capacity, maintain food quality, and extend services into more rural and underserved areas. **A full proposal is available for review in the WISH Grant Portal.**

WHAT MAKES THIS PROJECT COMPELLING:

In over three and a half years, CMI has fed over 22,850 people in 12 WV counties with 237,800 lbs of healthy and locally-sourced food. It has also put over \$704,500 back into the farmers' and small family business owners' pockets.

To support their current mission, CMI has a truck and two trailers. The refrigerated van is needed to expand the program and serve CMI customers who are unable to attend the mobile farmers' markets CMI currently offers due to transportation barriers or mobility challenges. In addition, the van will be easier for more drivers to operate and will save on gas costs.

Approximately \$40,000 has been raised for the van, and \$29,434 of the WISH grant funding will allow CMI to cover the rest of the vehicle cost. The remaining \$7,191 in funds will support van maintenance and fees over the next three years.

With this funding, CMI will significantly expand food access, improve community health outcomes, and ensure that transportation or mobility barriers do not prevent residents from receiving fresh, nourishing food.

Community Nonprofits

HARPERS FERRY-BOLIVAR HISTORIC TOWN FOUNDATION

First Zion Community and Culture Arts Center Rehabilitation

REQUESTED WISH FUNDING: \$36,625

historicharpersferry.org

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The Harpers Ferry-Bolivar Historic Foundation is preserving and rehabilitating a historic church in Harpers Ferry to use as a secular community cultural arts center. The center will fill a void in Harpers Ferry and Bolivar, which lacks a central community hub. The center will also house exhibit space highlighting the important history of the local African-American residents who founded the church. The WISH grant funding will be used to create the reception area/meeting room/exhibit space on the ground floor level of the building. **A full proposal is available for review in the WISH Grant Portal.**

WHAT MAKES THIS PROJECT COMPELLING:

Since the structure is located in the historic district of Harpers Ferry, preservation regulations require the use of specialized contractors, historically appropriate materials, and construction techniques no longer commonly used. These factors have contributed to a higher project cost estimation. Phase 1, which was the restoration of the building's exterior, has been completed.

The WISH grant funding will provide critical support to the Foundation's Phase 2 goals to complete renovations on the ground level of the building. Tasks to be completed using the funding include: installation of new water service, installation of new electric, removal of oil tank and furnace, demolition of interior partition walls and ceilings, installation of new underground sewer lines and sump-pump, pouring of new concrete floor, and framing and insulation of outer and interior partition walls.

The Foundation has been in existence for 26 years, with one of its goals being to address the critical need of a cultural and community space for both Harpers Ferry and Bolivar. Completion of the lower level will enable the Foundation to offer preliminary educational programming and community use while demonstrating the value of the center as a catalyst for additional fundraising.

The committee also recognizes that the WISH grant will pave the way for matching funds and future budget allocations from the Corporation of Harpers Ferry.

Community Nonprofits

MORGAN COUNTY STARTING POINTS, INC.

Bloom Teaching Garden and Art Collective; Paw Paw, WV

REQUESTED WISH FUNDING: \$36,625

www.starting-points.org

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Bloom Teaching Garden and Art Collective is a new initiative of Morgan County Starting Points (MCSP) that will create a safe, supervised outdoor learning space for girls in Paw Paw, WV. Adjacent to Paw Paw School, on property rented by MCSP, Bloom will turn an underutilized plot into a teaching garden and creative arts area where participants grow food, explore nature-based art, and build confidence through hands-on, team-based projects. The WISH grant funding will provide youth, adult, and two Shepherd University garden manager stipends; will purchase supplies to expand the raised garden bed infrastructure; and will cover art and programming expenses. **A full proposal is available for review in the WISH Grant Portal.**

WHAT MAKES THIS PROJECT COMPELLING:

Paw-Paw faces linked barriers to healthy youth development: high poverty and food insecurity, loss of local jobs and infrastructure, long travel distances for groceries and basic services, and ongoing impacts of the opioid crisis. Paw Paw Schools report a 65% free/reduced lunch rate, and many families travel nearly 40 miles for groceries and essential needs. As a result, many girls lack safe, supervised spaces; consistent mentors; and structured opportunities to build skills and imagine future pathways.

The Bloom Garden builds on the six-year success of MCSP's Empower U mentorship program by adding a permanent, place-based "leadership lab" that combines gardening, wellness education, creative expression, and youth-led service. Pop-up markets in later phases will provide a real-world setting for developing communication skills, budgeting, leadership, and entrepreneurship.

The WISH Grant Committee praises the project for providing a safe, girl-centered learning environment with programming that builds belonging, support, and positive youth development. It also finds the inclusion of Shepherd student mentors a wonderful tie to the immediate community.

Community Nonprofits

POTOMAC VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

Improving Facilities at Yankauer Nature Preserve

REQUESTED WISH FUNDING: \$36,625

potomacaudubon.org

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The Potomac Valley Audubon Society (PVAS) Yankauer Nature Preserve, just six miles from Shepherdstown, has become a popular destination for hikers, photographers, family picnics, wildflower enthusiasts, and more. The facilities, which include a large pavilion, are used by thousands of visitors and organized groups annually. WISH grant funding will provide necessary capital improvements to the 23 year old pavilion, including a roof replacement. **A full proposal is available for review in the WISH Grant Portal.**

WHAT MAKES THIS PROJECT COMPELLING:

The Yankauer Nature Preserve, one of four sites established in 1982 by PVAS, is a destination for nature enthusiasts, school groups, Boys and Girls Clubs, Scouting groups, CASA, Children's Home Society of WV, and other individuals. In addition, approximately 300 children attend the Audubon Society Discovery Camp there. The Pavilion is a necessary feature of the preserve space for safety and programming; however, the metal roof leaks and generates immense heat in the summer. In addition, the storage bay walls are degraded, the floor is unfinished in some areas, and art and camp supplies are sometimes ruined by weather and rodents.

If awarded funding, the camp intends to begin work immediately so that the pavilion is safe, dry, and fully operational in time for 2027 camps.

The WISH site visit team applauds the Yankauer team for "making a little go a long way." The need for structural repair is evident to allow the Reserve to provide the best facilities possible for the thousands of constituents it serves.

Shepherd University Projects

Center for Appalachian Studies and Communities

Appalachian Heritage Writer-in-Residence (AHWIR)

REQUESTED WISH FUNDING: \$36,625

shepherd.edu/appalachian

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The Appalachian Heritage Writer's Award and Appalachian Heritage Writer-in-Residence Project (AHWIR) were developed by Shepherd University, the Shepherd University Foundation, and the WV Humanities Council in 1998 to celebrate and honor the work of a distinguished contemporary Appalachian writer. In its nearly three decades of existence, the program has brought renowned authors to campus including Henry Louis Gates, Nikki Giovanni, and Barbara Kingsolver (among others). Annual attendance at these events hovers between 300-400, including Martinsburg High School students, the Senior Moments Book Club, and the Friends of Shepherdstown Public Library. In 2025, federal funding for the WV Humanities Council and WV Center for the Book, the two primary funding sources, was cut. The WISH Grant would allow for the program to continue for the next three years. **A full proposal is available for review in the WISH Grant Portal.**

WHAT MAKES THIS PROJECT COMPELLING:

The AHWIR has given Shepherd University immense visibility and influence well beyond the Eastern Panhandle. Although a scaled-back version was able to occur in 2025 after federal funding loss, that model is not sustainable. WISH support would allow AHWIR to continue for the next three years, giving its director time to secure long-term funding while also broadening the program's reach: expanding the program across the whole calendar year, inviting speakers beyond the literary world such as scientists and folk musicians, and building on new partnerships like the Conservation Film Festival and Tabler Farm.

Coming at a critical transition point for the AHWIR program, WISH funding will enable the continuation of this proven, well-run program that distinguishes Shepherd statewide while delivering programming that is meaningful to students and the surrounding community.

Shepherd University Projects

COLLEGE OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, MATHEMATICS,
AND NURSING; COLLEGE OF ARTS, HUMANITIES, AND SOCIAL SCIENCES;
AND SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Faculty-Led Career Exploration and Recruitment Initiative

REQUESTED WISH FUNDING: \$36,625

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Workforce shortages in West Virginia have created an urgent need to train students into high demand careers such as teaching, healthcare, social work, and environmental fields. As an important institution of higher education, Shepherd University offers programs in all of those areas, with the capacity to train more students than apply. This project seeks to address the critical need of overcoming the difficulty in reaching and informing local students about careers in those fields and encouraging them to consider Shepherd University for their training. The WISH Grant funding will support the development of faculty-led summer recruitment workshops that were introduced in 2025 with the highly successful Future of You nursing workshops. **A full proposal is available for review in the WISH Grant Portal.**

WHAT MAKES THIS PROJECT COMPELLING:

If funded by WISH, this new cross-campus initiative will build on the success achieved last summer through the nursing program. Unfortunately, the funding source for that workshop is no longer available. The project team, led by nursing school professor Laureen Donovan and biology professor Sara Reynolds, is comprised of faculty members who are dedicated to the program's success. WISH funds would cover faculty stipends, program coordination, and workshop materials, with the goal of reaching up to 720 students over three years while boosting Shepherd enrollment.

This project also aims to collect the data needed to make the case for permanent university funding and is backed by Shepherd's Offices of Enrollment Management and Communications. The committee feels like this initiative is innovative, bold, and responds to the urgent need to help young people in West Virginia connect with in-demand careers.

Shepherd University Projects

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, HISTORY, AND MODERN LANGUAGES

Shepherd University Writing Project

REQUESTED WISH FUNDING: \$36,625

shepherd.edu/eml

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The Shepherd University Writing Project will address the critical need for stronger writing, reading, and critical thinking skills among students of all levels. It is designed as a two-year series of trainings for teachers, as well as a series of fun, engaging programs for students. The WISH grant funding will cover four initiatives: two summer institutes for twenty K-12 teachers per summer; training for Shepherd faculty through a “Writing Across the Curriculum” masterclass; two annual “literacy pop-up” events on campus aimed toward K-12 students; and the incorporation of Shepherd English and education majors into trainings and programming, allowing them to earn credits and professional experience. **A full proposal is available for review in the WISH Grant Portal.**

WHAT MAKES THIS PROJECT COMPELLING:

Research shows that an increasing number of students at all age levels, especially in West Virginia, lack the writing, reading, and critical thinking skills essential for academic success, lifelong professional advancement, and civic engagement. In this time of increasing reliance on AI, it is crucial that students at all ages and in all disciplines study with effective teachers of writing. To that end, Shepherd University has already trained over 70 K-12 teachers since 2023 through the Shepherd University Writing Project (SUWP), the only Eastern Panhandle site of the nation-wide National Writing Project.

The WISH grant funding will allow for expansion of this already-successful program, directly impacting over 220 K-University teachers and Shepherd students. Beyond these 220 lie the countless students and colleagues who would be influenced and taught by the educators who take part in the SUWP program.

With dedicated and enthusiastic Shepherd faculty members, led by WISH member Dr. Heidi Hanrahan, and with the known success of the Writing Project’s methods, the committee highly recommends this proposal.

Acknowledgements

2026 Grant Committee

Carol Kable, Co-Chair

Harriet Pearson, Co-Chair

Patty Bain-Bachner

Helen “Hap” Becker

Catherine Buchanan- Lowe ’89

Pamela Curtis

Susan Davis ’77

Dana DeJarnett

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