

Blanchard: Aid groups with proven records

By Tim Richard
staff writer

It's not big money: 14 cents a person Oakland countywide, 20 cents a head in suburban Wayne County, 78 cents per capita statewide.

But Gov. James J. Blanchard said his new \$7.3 million Neighborhood Builders Alliance grants "will focus money on groups with a proven record of success."

"The focus will be on housing, beautification, opportunities for employment for kids, crime prevention. It's organization-specific."

THE GOVERNOR stopped in his old backyard area, Royal Oak, Friday afternoon as part of his statewide tour on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday holiday, to announce the suburban grants (see chart).

In an interview, Blanchard was asked to respond to Southfield Mayor Donald Fracassi's comment that the money wouldn't go far when spread across a batch of programs. Fracassi suggested a single target: dilapidated housing.

"We're trying to focus the money on neighborhood groups with a proven record of success," said Blanchard.

"The focus will be on housing, beautification, opportunities for employment."

"But it's more organization-specific. That is, if an organization has shown expertise in an area, then we want to generate more energy."

"We'll watch it very carefully and monitor it, to see what impact we have."

"We don't want to create a state bureaucracy, and we want to reward those who are already doing good things and hold them out as role models for others."

THE GOVERNOR used the state holiday to tour Flint and Detroit, too, in announcing 128 grants for groups in 41 counties. Average grant was \$57,000.

"It's one-of-a-kind in the nation. We're starting small."

"There's not enough money in this world to finance all the hopes and desires and dreams. We're dealing with limited resources," he said in prepared remarks.

Blanchard had asked for \$83 million in his fiscal 1989 budget but got less than one-tenth of that.

The program is a prime example of what the Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis and others of a new generation of governors are doing.

They begin by recognizing that big federal grants are a thing of the past and that states must manage limited new dollars carefully. They focus on new programs, outside traditional state departments, and use small amounts to make big changes.

Detroit groups received the biggest single chunk of money — \$1.7 million — but even that amounted to only \$1.40 a person spread across the city.

OTHER STATE needs, such as community colleges and job programs, face "a very tight budget," Blanchard said.

"There are always going to be job initiatives. With the caution budget, it's hard to say. We're still in the process of making those decisions." His budget is due for delivery to the Legislature in early February.

"The demand for spending exceeds all the available revenue. The revenue will be up, but not enough to satisfy all the important needs."



Gov. James J. Blanchard
Incentives to groups

Neighborhood groups and grants

Here is a list of suburban civic groups receiving state grants under the \$7.3 million Neighborhood Builders Alliance program:

OAKLAND COUNTY

- Total: \$159,000.
- Boys and Girls Club of Royal Oak — \$25,000 mentorship program for 90 youths ages 12-17 identified as being "at risk" to themselves and the community.
- Community Services of Oakland (Ferndale) — \$22,000 neighborhood cleanup of vacant lots and beautification.
- Community Services of Oakland (Hazel Park) — \$22,000 for cleanup and beautification.
- Hazel Park Beautification Committee — \$5,000 to plant flowers and shrubs in neglected areas, targeting homes of seniors.
- Neighbor for Neighbor (Davisburg) — \$33,000 for winterizing facility to serve 160 low-income, elderly, unemployed and single parents year around.
- Pontiac Area Urban League —

\$51,000 for summer day camp and youth services for low-income residents of the Lakeside Project, generally considered the city's problem area.

WAYNE SUBURBS

- Total: \$227,000.
- Hamtramck Block Club — \$28,000 for minor home repairs for 50 homes, to be done by occupants and local residents for seniors and handicapped.
- Massachusetts Improvement

Association (Highland Park) — \$28,000 for general beautification, including painting, landscaping and cleanup.

- Reggie McKenzie Foundation (Highland Park) — \$28,000, a tutoring program for 100 youth grades six to 12 in employability skills, mentoring and academic programs.
- Wyandotte Historical Society — \$28,000 to begin preservation in an historical neighborhood.
- Youth Living Center — \$110,000 for renovation of a closed

elementary school to create meeting rooms for this and other local groups.

MACOMB COUNTY

Total: \$99,000 for one project — Boy Scout Troop 97, Mount Clemens, partial funding to build a youth center with volunteer labor.

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