



Shown at the presentation of the first ever Alabama Tourism grant for the Arley Women's Club, from left, AWC members, Montie Pafford, club secretary; Krista Givens, parilamentarian; President Laurie McGriff; State Representative Tim Wadsworth, Economic Developer Nicole Wadsworth, State Senate Pro-Tem Garlan Gudger; AWC Vice-President Beth Sargent; Sara Little, treasurer; Immediate Past President Barbara Wills.

Arley Women’s Club awarded Alabama Tourism Grant

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ARLEY - History was made in at least two ways for the Arley Women’s Club recently, when they received their first Product Development Grant through the Alabama Department of Tourism at the highest funded amount they have ever received - \$50,000.

Special guests to make the presentation at the AWC meeting at Arley First Baptist Church, were State Senate Pro-Tem Garlan Gudger, State Representative Tim Wadsworth and Economic Developer Nicole Wadsworth.

“It’s the biggest allotment the Department of Tourism has given to the women’s club,” Wadsworth stressed. “I don’t think they have ever had a tourism grant.

“They do a wonderful job for our community,” Wadsworth added.

During the process of obtaining the grant, state legislators and Arley Women’s Club President Laurie McGriff met with the department of tourism, which was impressed with the magnitude of projects the AWC had been able to accomplish for not just Winston but surrounding counties as well, the Wadsworths stated.

“This particular tourism grant is the first of its kind and for this group that we’ve ever had,” Gudger added. “So with Winston County, my job with Representative Wadsworth, is to bring money back into this county.

“By us working together and realizing (the women’s club) is going to take this particular money and then multiply it throughout this whole county, that was our goal,” Gudger added.

The actual grant amount was a surprise for the large congregation of women’s club members at their lunch meeting, until the large check was unveiled by McGriff and Club Vice President Beth Sargent.

As they unveiled the check, members beat the tables throughout the church fellowship hall, creating a drum roll in anticipation of what was about to happen.

“This is actually the biggest grant that the Arley Women’s Club has ever received,” McGriff said, as the check’s amount was revealed to the audience.

When the check was fully revealed, the audience cheered and applauded.

“We are absolutely thrilled,” McGriff pointed out. “And we can’t give enough credit to Tim and Nicole and Garlan...They fully endorsed us.”

“If you don’t apply, you don’t get,” Representative Wadsworth told the audience.

“What y’all have done is tremendous, because one of the things used in this process was the fact that all of the budget that (the women’s club) did last year was either \$80,000 or \$100,000 budget, and they awarded \$50,000 of that,” Wadsworth pointed out.

Wadsworth then commended the women’s club for efforts to make the community grow, including major projects through the years to enhance Hamner Park in Arley.

Nicole Wadsworth then addressed the audience, stating she has known Lee Sentell, director of the state tourism department, for 30 years.

“He was so impressed with your women’s club, and the fact that there’s events going on every week, every month, so it was a very easy sell,” Nicole

stated.

“We appreciate each and every one of you in this room and all you do, not just for the Arley community but for Winston County and surrounding communities,” she added.

The \$50,000 tourism grant will go a long way to make some much needed improvements at Hamner Park, McGriff explained.

“We’ve been rocking along on our budgets,” said McGriff. “We’ve been doing great on our fundraisers. We have a well oiled machine.”

McGriff then outlined the top three uses of the tourism grant funds for the park and community, as outlined by the women’s club board.

“This is our first time, as far as I know, asking for this tourism money, and we went big, and we were rewarded, so we want to be responsible citizens,” McGriff pointed out.

“What we want to do is tie it into something that gives back to the community, which is our vision,” she added. “Everything we do goes right back into the community.

“...We thought with this great amount of money, it would be good to tie it into the park, because the park is where a lot of things center around in the town, so we came up with our wish list,” McGriff explained.

Plans for the tourism funding must revolve around the concept of tourism, according to McGriff.

The top idea for the funding is building additional pickle ball courts on a flat area near the tennis courts at Hamner Park, McGriff stated.

“We do a pickle ball tournament as part of Arley Day. This would help us expand that, make it bigger, bring in more tourism, and it would benefit the com-

munity as a whole year round,” she noted.

McGriff noted that women’s club members have approached the Arley Town Council about these options for approval, since the town owns Hamner Park, McGriff explained.

Another plan for the tourism funding would be for a pole-barn type structure to cover a portion of the children’s playground at the park, McGriff continued.

The third use of the funding would be an electronic sign that would display not only Welcome to Arley, but also activities and

events going on at Hamner Park as well as throughout the community, McGriff indicated.

“There are a lot of people who go by Helicon Road and who see these signs and these announcements,” McGriff said.

Gudger, who attended the event with his sister Jill Gudger Howell and mother Dot Gudger, noted his mother wanted to join the women’s club and take part in their services in helping the community.

“My sister came into the room earlier and said, ‘This is what’s great about America,’”

Gudger noted. “Look at the diversity of all the women who are in this room right now in a church, making sure God is first, eating together and bringing the community together.

“Now we are going to take this, and take it back out these doors and help this whole community,” Gudger continued. “Thank you for what you are doing.”

Gudger concluded by saying he would continue working for them in Montgomery, making sure they have the funds needed year-to-year.

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