

334-022024

**RESOLUTION: Approving \$50,000 from the Spirit Fund's Government Identified Community Projects Category for Pillars, Inc Ascend Program**

**TO THE WINNEBAGO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:**

**WHEREAS**, Pillars, Inc (hereinafter "Pillars") provides shelter, support, and solutions to address the housing needs in our community; and

**WHEREAS**, since the inception of the program in 2017, the Ascend Program has served over 80 young adults on their journeys to successful independent adulthood; and

**WHEREAS**, Pillars acts and advocates on their own and in partnership with others to increase access to affordable housing; and

**WHEREAS**, funding from the Winnebago County Spirit Fund will address overdue and underfunded maintenance for 16 Ascend units that are home to 25 households; and

**WHEREAS**, Ascend Program participants pay monthly program fees (which cover housing and all other program costs e.g. case management and professional counseling services) 70% below market rate; and

**WHEREAS**, affordable rent helps support participants in establishing financial stability and self-sufficiency.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Winnebago County Board of Supervisors that \$50,000 from the Spirit Fund's Government Identified Community Project category be approved for Pillars, Inc. Ascend Program.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** by the Winnebago County Board of Supervisors that upon completion of the project, Pillars will submit supporting documentation to the Winnebago County Finance Director outlining the expenditures. The documentation will be submitted within 6 months of the completion of the project but not to exceed 5 years from date of disbursement.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** by the Winnebago County Board of Supervisors that Pillars shall be responsible for reimbursement to Winnebago County for any disbursed funds which are determined by Winnebago County to have been misused or misappropriated. Any reimbursement of funds which is required by Winnebago County shall be due within 45 days after giving written notice to recipient of such misuse or misappropriation.

*Fiscal Note: This resolution will not amend the County Budget. \$50,000 will be authorized for use from the Spirit Fund.*

Respectfully submitted by:

**ARPA STRATEGY AND OUTCOMES COMMISSION**

Commission Vote: **8-0**

Vote Required for Passage: **Two-Thirds of Membership**

Approved by the Winnebago County Executive this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2024.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jonathan D. Doemel  
Winnebago County Executive

# Agenda Item Report



**Winnebago County**  
*The Wave of the Future*

DATE: 01/31/24  
FROM: Winnebago County Executive's Office  
RE: Pillars, Inc. request for \$50,000 in Spirit Funds in support of facilities and maintenance of a semi-independent program (Ascend) that provides supportive services and independent living skills paired with affordable housing for young adults living with mental health challenges.

## **General Description:**

From homelessness to coming home, Pillars provides shelter, support, and solutions to address the housing needs in our community. Since the inception of the program in 2017, Ascend has served over 80 young adults on their journeys to successful independent adulthood. Funding from the Winnebago County Spirit Fund will be used to address overdue and underfunded maintenance for the 16 Ascend units that are home to 25 households.

## **Action Requested:**

Pillars, Inc. request for \$50,000 in Spirit Funds to support the Ascend program.

## **Procedural Steps:**

Committee of Jurisdiction: ARPA Strategy & Outcomes Commission      Meeting date: 01/31/2024

## **Background:**

Since the inception of the program in 2017, Ascend, a program of Pillars, has served over 80 young adults on their journeys to successful independent adulthood. Funding from the Winnebago County Spirit Fund will be used to address overdue and underfunded maintenance for the 16 Ascend units that are home to 25 households.

Pillars acts and advocates, on our own and in partnership with others, to increase access to affordable housing. As such, Ascend program participants pay monthly program fees (which cover housing and all other program costs like case management and professional counseling services) 70% below market rate. This affordable rent helps support participants in establishing financial stability and self-sufficiency.

## **Policy Discussion:**

The commission has recognized Government Identified Community Projects that support or enhance county services:

- 1) Pillars and the Ascend program's goal is to stability of safe, affordable housing in conjunction with resources for mental health support, education, employment, and basic living skills, program participants are set up for a lifetime of success and self-sufficiency.
- 2) \$50,000 Spirit Fund Grant will make that possible for the 25 households who reside in Ascend units in Winnebago County to receive services.

## **Attachments:**

**Name of Organization leading the project/looking for funding:** Pillars, Inc.

**Assigned Application Number:** 58

**Organization:** Pillars, Inc.

**CEO/Executive Director/Organization Leader:** Lisa Strandberg, Executive Director

**Name of person completing survey:** Alona Boots

**Email:** aboots@pillarsinc.org

**Phone:** (920) 734 - 9192 x116

**Type of organization requesting funding:** Non-profit organization

**Organization's mission statement (if applicable):** From homelessness to coming home, Pillars provides shelter, support, and solutions to address the housing needs in our community.

**Does the organization conduct a third-party financial audit?** Yes.

**Describe the general scope of the project for which funding would be requested:** Pillars requests \$50,00 in support of facilities and maintenance of Ascend. Ascend is a semi-independent program that provides supportive services and independent living skills paired with affordable housing for young adults living with mental health challenges. Since the inception of the program in 2017, Ascend has served over 80 young adults on their journeys to successful independent adulthood. Funding from the Winnebago County Spirit Fund will be used to address overdue and underfunded maintenance for the 16 Ascend units that are home to 25 households.

The 16 units that make up Ascend are owned and managed by Pillars. The housing is broken into two categories: Program Units and Non-Program Units (rental units). Program units are dedicated to housing Ascend participants while the remainder of the units are rented out below market rate. Rental income generated by these non-program units helps support the overall operations of Ascend. However, this rental income is not enough to sustain the program on its own.

Pillars acts and advocates, on our own and in partnership with others, to increase access to affordable housing. As such, Ascend program participants pay monthly program fees (which cover housing and all other program costs like case management and professional counseling services) well below market rate – 70% below market rate, in fact. This affordable rent helps support participants in establishing financial stability and self-sufficiency. Tenants residing non-program properties are charged below market rate, unlike many local landlords who charge rates far above true market rate. In charging these affordable rates, Pillars does not generate the full income potential of these units. Pillars absorbs the difference of income that would be generated by charging full rental amounts. These factors and more contribute to the Ascend facilities and maintenance budget operating at an amount below what is needed to maintain

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the units at a comfortable level. Projects like tree removal, flooring rehab, garage upkeep, and more all remain in need of maintenance.

Having a home is imperative for these young adults' success. Pillars strives to provide a safe, comfortable home for all individuals who live with Pillars. Funding from this grant will make that possible for the 25 households who reside in Ascend units.

**Who will lead the project (Internal, City, Winnebago County, State of WI...)?** Pillars, Inc.

**Where is the primary location of the project?** Neenah, WI

**How many total individuals would this project serve each year?** 25 households.

**What areas (cities/regions/school districts) of Winnebago County will the project serve?**

Northern Winnebago County, including the Neenah school district.

**Please describe the lasting impact of this project on the community:** The primary goal of Ascend is to quickly and dramatically improve the future for at-risk young adults who are living with a mental health challenge. As a participant of the Ascend program, young adults receive access to professional services like case management, life skills education, professional counseling, and a vast network of resources and community support. With these support systems and affordable, stable housing, these program participants have a firm foundation to build upon their independence and self-sufficiency. With a program duration of 2 years, young adults have the opportunity to explore career paths, continue education, and grow as an individual.

By leveraging the stability of safe, affordable housing in conjunction with resources for mental health support, education, employment, and basic living skills, program participants are set up for a lifetime of success and self-sufficiency. As these young adults are lifted up, they are supported in rising to the level of independence of which they are capable of. In the end, this yields a more vibrant and engaged community, a stronger workforce, less reliance on community programs and resources, and individuals who have greater opportunity to achieve success in every part of their lives. When the young adults of our society thrive, so does the community.

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For many program participants, Ascend is their first experience having a safe, clean, and stable home. Ascend creates a new standard of home for these young adults' futures. When you're well-rested, healthy and strong, doing the hard work of overcoming barriers becomes easier. Stephanie\*, a graduate of the program, shared a bit about her housing history and experience. Stephanie\* reported that living at Ascend was the longest she had ever remained in one place. She went on to express her appreciation for having an environment where she can be "independent without drugs, alcohol, or guests distracting [her] from [her] goals."

Ophelia\*, an upcoming graduate of the Ascend program, said, "for the first time in my life, I'm able to have regular therapy." She added, "I've never had a case manager before that could see me regularly, every single week. It's been really amazing to have that consistency and know that there's people that I can count on." Because of Ascend, Ophelia\* was given the support and resources necessary to pursue her dream education and career. Ophelia's\* next step toward independence is an apartment through Pillars Stable Housing. There, she will benefit from rent adjusted to 30% of her childcare worker income. Manageable rent will ensure she can continue to care for herself well, without financial stress or fear for her safety.

The direct impact of these maintenance needs will be tough to measure. Ascend has provided over 80 individuals with a place to call home while they work toward successful independence. By investing in the maintenance of these properties, you are investing in the young adults of our community and providing them with the best chance for success. This funding will allow Pillars to make the necessary investment in the homes that 25 young adults and 10 households of community members rely on each year.

\*While the young adults mentioned in this narrative are real, their names have been changed to protect their privacy.

**In what stage is the project?** Within 12 mo. of completion

**What is the estimated completion date?** Ongoing

**Estimated cost of the entire project:** \$215,405.29

**Requested amount (range) from Winnebago County Spirit Fund:** \$50,000

**Name of Organization leading the project/looking for funding:** Pillars, Inc.

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**Other than Spirit funds, how will the project be funded:** Diverse channels of revenue funds

Pillars on an annual basis. These streams include community giving, government and non-government grant awards, rent and program fees, and fundraising events.

**Is completion of the project dependent on receiving the full amount requested?** Yes & No.

Regularly planned maintenance – maintenance that is vital for the functioning of the units - will remain in the budget. If not selected, any projects made possible by this funding would be delayed further until other funding could be secured.

**Has the organization received any type of government (local, state, or federal) funding in the past 2 years? if so, please list** Ascend does not receive or utilize government funding. Pillars, as an

organization, does receive specific government grant funds that are restricted to certain programs with strict criteria.

**What portion of the project will be or is anticipated to be funded by local, state or federal government funding?** None. Ascend does not receive any government funding.

**List any ARPA funding received from other cities, counties or municipalities:** Ascend does not receive any government funding from any city, county, or municipality.

**Who will be responsible for any ongoing maintenance of the project?** Pillars, Inc.

**Will this increase the organizations operating expenses, if so, please explain how that will be maintained?** Should Ascend be selected to receive this grant, operational expenses for this project would increase during the fiscal year in which the facilities and maintenance projects are addressed. However, it will not add additional expenses to the budget beyond that.

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**Assigned Application Number: 58**

**Project Information as Sorted by Citizen Panel as of 9/5/2023**

**R/Y/G and original Application number:** 58

**Request from:** Pillars, Inc.

**Type of project:** Maintenance/ homelessness

**General Scope of Project:** facilities and maintenance

**Project Lead:** Pillars, Inc.

**Primary location:** Neenah, WI

**# of individuals served by project:** 25 households.

**Areas served:** Northern Winnebago County, including the Neenah school district.

**Lasting impact:** The primary goal of Ascend is to quickly and dramatically improve the future for at-risk young adults who are living with a mental health challenge. As a participant of the Ascend program, young adults receive access to professional services like case management, life skills education, professional counseling, and a vast network of resources and community support. With these support systems and affordable, stable housing, these program participants have a firm foundation to build upon their independence and self-sufficiency. With a program duration of 2 years, young adults have the opportunity to explore career paths, continue education, and grow as an individual.

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**Completion Date:** Ongoing

**Project Stage:** Within 12 mo. of completion

**Project Cost:** \$215,405.29

**Requested Amount:** 50,000

**Other Funding:** Diverse channels of revenue funds Pillars on an annual basis. These streams include community giving, government and non-government grant awards, rent and program fees, and fundraising events.

**Is full Amt Required:** Yes & No. Regularly planned maintenance – maintenance that is vital for the functioning of the units - will remain in the budget. If not selected, any projects made possible by this funding would be delayed further until other funding could be secured.

**Other Govt. Funding:** Ascend does not receive or utilize government funding. Pillars, as an organization, does receive specific government grant funds that are restricted to certain programs with strict criteria.

**Portion funded by local, state or federal government funding:**

None. Ascend does not receive any government funding.

**Other ARPA Funds:** Ascend does not receive any government funding from any city, county, or municipality.

**Ongoing Maint:** Pillars, Inc.

**Increase to Operational budget:** Should Ascend be selected to receive this grant, operational expenses for this project would increase during the fiscal year in which the facilities and maintenance projects are addressed. However, it will not add additional expenses to the budget beyond

**Legacy:** no



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**One-time funding:** no

**Geographic service area:** Northern Winn. Co.

**Other funding:** Diverse channels of revenue funds Pillars on an annual basis. These streams include community giving, government and non-government grant awards, rent and program fees, and fundraising events.

**Notes:** request: 50,000: looking for maintenance/upkeep costs

**GOVT: Debt Avoidance:** N/A

**Sustainability focused:** N/A

**ER Response:** N/A

**Water Quality:** N/A

**Quality of Life:** N/A

**Funding to assist private investor:** N/A