

Valparaiso Awards Grants to Businesses in \$300,000 VIB Program

The City of Valparaiso has awarded 50 Valparaiso businesses with Valparaiso Invests in Business (VIB) grants in an innovative program to support businesses with the added expenses they have incurred to maintain their workforce during the pandemic. “We created this grant as another way to support our business community,” said Mayor Matt Murphy. “We have extraordinary businesses in Valparaiso, and we recognize the hardships they’ve had to overcome over the past 18 months,” he said.

The Valpo Invests in Business (VIB) grant was designed to help businesses maintain operations and retain their workforce, with a priority for low- to moderate-income jobs. The City worked to create this program by securing a grant through the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) with additional support from the Valparaiso Redevelopment Commission. Valparaiso was the only Northwest Indiana community to invest in this program and receive funding. “Valparaiso has put more money in the hands of local businesses than any other community statewide under this grant,” said Murphy.

The City of Valparaiso promoted the grant program through the Valpo Chamber, media releases and social media and made applications available online. In addition, Valparaiso Economic Development Director Brandon Dickinson hosted an information session to assist businesses in applying. The City received more than 60 applications for VIB grants and awarded the 50 grants based on application criteria. Grants ranged from \$2,800 to \$10,000. Recipients have been notified of their awards and checks will be distributed within the coming weeks.

“I think it’s pretty great that the City of Valparaiso is doing what they can to support small businesses and it’s one of the reasons we’re here,” said Steven Hedges, owner of Rusthead Design Corporation, one of the businesses receiving a \$10,000 VIB grant. “We’ve seen the community really get behind business here,” he said. “The grant will help so much with both our short- and long-term financial goals,” agreed Deanna Gallardo, co-owner and director of Mirror Image Dance Academy, another \$10,000 VIB grant recipient. “The grant will allow me to grow my business and expand my studio. I’m also thrilled for my landlord and feel for the landlords who have had to go without funds too,” she said.