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## City awards four hospitality tax grants

By Haley Jones [hjones@thelancasternews.com](mailto:hjones@thelancasternews.com)

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Four local organizations will receive hospitality tax grants totaling \$50,000 from the city of Lancaster.

The grants were announced at the March 28 Lancaster City Council meeting.

The four grants awarded are:

- Carolina Elite Panthers Mentor, Leadership and Sports Program was awarded \$12,800 for a 2023 youth football competition home games program. It includes four youth football game days — Sept. 2, Sept. 16, Sept. 30 and Oct. 7, all at the Lancaster High School stadium.

“We have been having games for the last three years and they have all been very successful and overcrowded to where we can’t house everyone at our convenient location,” said owner Marquis Witherspoon.

“Each game has had over 600 visitors, each game day. We don’t want to continue inviting this many tourists into Lancaster and not be able to provide seating areas, restrooms and parking spaces.”

- The iAM Dance Center of the Arts was awarded \$14,720 for its fourth annual Pre-Thanksgiving Majorette Dance Competition.

“With each dance competition that we host, we tend to attract six to eight dance companies, traveling from Virginia down to the Georgia, Alabama and Florida areas,” said owner Andrea McCoy. “Over the years, this Thanksgiving break competition has proven to be one of our larger events.”

Winning teams receive cash prizes, and McCoy said the dance center “takes pride in hosting family-friendly, fun and professional events here in the Red Rose City.”

- The Ja’Von Crockett Foundation was awarded \$12,000 for its 15th annual National Youth Empowerment Kids Day Festival at Preston Blackmon Park.

According to Crockett, the festival “is an annual event that donates clothes, food, school supplies, toiletries and services, such as haircuts, to the local community kids.”

Crockett, a Lancaster native, said he started the foundation as a way to give back to the city that raised and empowered him.

- The James R. Clark Memorial Sickle Cell Foundation was awarded \$10,480 for its annual Sickle Cell Festival Family Day.

“The James R. Clark Memorial Sickle Cell Foundation Lancaster Satellite Office launched a movement in 2016 to ‘Break the Sickle Cycle,’ with a mission to be the voice and face of sickle cell in providing educational events, awareness, support and genetic trait screening to all cultures, races and ethnicities in the Lancaster community,” said community health worker Doris Ealey.

The festival includes food, music and entertainment, all to help provide sickle cell awareness on a wider scale, she said. The Lancaster Satellite Office has 14 committee members, community volunteers and partners.

The City Finance Committee vote March 22 to award these grants, as well as the City Council March 28 vote to approve the grants, were both unanimous. Council members Tomica Marsh and Hazel Taylor were absent March 28. Fourteen applications were submitted for grants.

“We looked at the criteria and I think it was the thought of the Finance Committee that more of those funds needed to be use in regards to activities and programs that more so benefited our citizens and also brought in tourism to our city with their events as we continue to move forward,” said Councilwoman Jackie Harris.

Grant recipients must provide proof of grant expenditures, as well as data on attendance, room and meal numbers, event success or failures and the impact on the city of Lancaster.

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