Bantam festival pays off

19 nonprofit groups share $20,000 from Jeep organization

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The Friends of the Bantam Jeep Association also are friends of the community.

The association doled out a total of $20,000 to 19 different nonprofits from money made from this year’s Bantam Jeep Heritage Festival. In addition, the association had already given $15,000 to local organizations that assisted with the 2016 festival, which was held in June.

“When our new organization was formed last fall to secure the future of the Bantam Jeep Heritage Festival, our board of directors felt very strongly that a portion of the festival proceeds needed to support Butler County’s nonprofit and civic organizations,” said Rodney Schaffer, association president, in a news release.

The donations ranged from $500 to $3,000, with the Butler County Historical Society being given the latter figure.

“We’re excited to see that money supporting Butler, the birthplace of the Jeep,” said Pat Collins, executive director of the society.

In July, the historical society brought in artists from across the world to paint 10 murals representing Butler’s past.

Four of those paintings were not mounted onto walls, and the money will go toward installing them onto walls around the city. This includes a mural of the Bantam Jeep on the wall of 123 W. New Castle St.

Collins said it has not yet been determined when the murals will go up.

The $3,000 was provided by festival attendees who bought items during the festival from Omix-ADA, a sponsor of the festival’s history exhibit.

The historical society was one of 60 nonprofit organizations that made a request to receive donations. Nineteen were chosen.

Schaffer said he is looking forward to the fruits of the donations.

“Our 2016 recipients represent a wide-range of services to our county, and they all have projects that impact thousands of our residents,” said Schaffer. “We’re excited to see how these gifts will enhance their efforts and benefit the people they serve.”

Schaffer also gave credit to the festival’s volunteers for making the donations possible.

“We would not be able to offer these gifts without the more than 400 volunteers who help to plan and execute the festival each year,” he said. “These gifts are an example of how their time and talents are used to not just benefit the festival, but to help our entire community.”

Festival director Patti Jo Lambert said the donations are planned to become an annual occurrence.

She said the board of directors has from its beginning embraced the idea of giving back to the community.

The Bantam Jeep Heritage Festival is held in June and attracts more than 2,000 Jeeps each year. The Friends of the Bantam Jeep Association has been in charge of it since October 2015. It took over the event from the Butler County Tourism and Convention Bureau, which began the event in 2011.