

**NEWS RELEASE  
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## **FIREFLY CENTER FOR ART & WELLBEING AWARDED GRANT TO SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN NORTHERN MINNESOTA**

**December 20, 2022 (Bemidji, MN)** – The Firefly Center for Art & Wellness has been awarded \$110,000 by the Blandin Foundation.

The Firefly Center for Art & Wellbeing will boost rural access to critically needed mental health services in an unbiased, creative, and welcoming environment that fosters community, inclusion, and equality.

The Firefly Center for Art & Wellbeing, a component fund of the Northwest Minnesota Foundation, is a mixed-use center that will provide mental health services, art therapy, space for creatives and community groups, and offer three residential units in response to a rural housing shortage.

An integral part of the project is the Center's partnership with Alluma. Alluma is committed to partnering with the Firefly Center to expand access to mental health services in Fosston and east Polk County. This partnership utilizes a new model for mental health service delivery that combines the arts with mental wellbeing to create a more inclusive and destigmatized environment for all those seeking care.

In 2020, the Fosston Arts & Culture Commission formally recognized the need for mental health service delivery in rural communities within rural Minnesota. The commission then worked in collaboration with ArtSpace to conduct a feasibility and sustainability study, from which the commission identified a prospective center location and developed a business plan, which included a capital budget summary, operations, and projected cash flow.

The Firefly Center for Art & Wellbeing will be a 501c3 nonprofit corporation and a project fund has been established with the Northwest Minnesota Foundation. The 11-member board of directors will include volunteers who represent the following: the arts, mental health services, financial, housing, and those who have had lived experience with regard to mental health.

In addition to Alluma, the Firefly Center has commitments of support from the Fosston Arts & Culture Commission Board; Pine to Prairie Folk School; Fosston Community Library & Arts Association; Carlin Family Funeral Service; Todd Selk, Superintendent at Fosston School District 601; Essentia Health; The Old School Artist Retreat Center; Fosston Police Department; area business owners, and City of Fosston leaders.

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