

New Hampshire

Community Development • Community Facilities Direct Loan

Where YOU Can Be YOU!

John Higgins, Executive Director of Ledyard Charter School in Lebanon, NH, is one of those people who just *loves* working with kids. The young people attending Ledyard have had “some major life curveballs thrown their way,” according to Higgins, and so require an alternative approach to learning. Central to the Ledyard curriculum is a community-building ethos that engages the students with the idea that their contributions to the group create a foundation of self-worth for themselves as individuals.

Higgins was the point person for securing a \$1.07 million loan from USDA Rural Development to purchase and renovate the building Ledyard has been leasing for five years. These funds—along with \$250,000 raised by Lebanon residents—taught the Ledyard kids another important lesson: Their community values them.

Community Facilities programs from USDA Rural Development offer direct loans, loan guarantees and grants to essential public services and facilities in communities across rural America, including public schools and universities.

After the property sale is finalized, remaining funds will be used to add ADA-compliant bathrooms, build a new entrance and brick facade, construct another stairwell to improve safety measures, and redesign empty retail space into classrooms. John likes to say that “Ledyard is a place where you can be you,” and judging from the diversity and abundance of student projects and art pieces on display, and testimonials from former students, there’s little doubt that he and his colleagues are fully committed to creating that feeling:

“LCS reaches out to the kids and tries to make sure they do the right thing. Teachers accept you for who you are but make sure every kid is in class. I like that because they treat you like family, and that’s the happiest thing when your teacher actually cares about you.”

- Ledyard Charter School graduate



Top: Ledyard students create a new world;
Bottom: Recent grads celebrate their achievement

Obligation Amount: \$1.07 million

Date of Obligation: 8/4/20

Congressional District: Rep. Kuster, New Hampshire; Sen. Shaheen and Sen. Hassan

District 2

Partners:

Demographics:

Impact: A public charter school received a significant USDA loan to purchase and renovate the building it had leased for the previous five years. The open-enrollment, non-competitive school is a place where kids with life challenges can thrive in a community-building learning environment.

Story updated September 2020 • USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.