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Hamilton students get reading help from tutors funded by LPEF donors

Travis is really concentrating now. Looking carefully at the words on the page, picking up visual clues and hearing hints from Miss Deborah.

The Hamilton 1st-grader has been fidgeting during this morning session at a hallway desk with Deborah Nerud, but he's more engaged since he selected the book, "Jack And The Box," by Art Spiegelman, in which Jack the rabbit gets a new toy.

"I am not a bad toy. I am a silly toy." Travis reads, sounding out each word from the book and making facial expressions. "It's nice to meet you, Jack."

Travis is one of about 120 students at Hamilton/SOTA I Elementary School involved in a special tutoring program funded by donors to the La Crosse Public Education Foundation (LPEF). The \$50,000 gift has allowed the school to hire a dozen part-time tutors like Deborah Nerud to regularly work with students in need of extra reading time.



Travis, a 1st-grader at Hamilton Elementary, loves reading graphic novels with help from tutor Deborah Nerud.

The donors, who wish to remain anonymous, had volunteered at Hamilton and saw a need for students to have more one-on-one time reading with an adult. They conceived a program to hire parents, senior citizens and others – providing them with extra income while helping students improve skills. At the current rate of spending, the funding should last several school years.

Principal Steve Michaels credits the program – along with other intensive reading support efforts -- with helping students improve skills as measured by regular assessments. "Those kids are loving reading and getting time with a caring adult."

Nerud says Travis is "very smart kid ... he just needed help focusing." Nerud, who has a 2nd-grader and 4th-grader at Hamilton, says the program provides that "special focused reading time that he may not be getting in the class or at home or whatever."

MORE ONLINE: Learn more and see a short video on the Hamilton reading program by visiting our website: LaCrosseEducationFoundation.org/Hamiltonreading



North Woods Teacher Heather Stern receives a grant from LPEF President Shawn Dutchin.

\$32,982 in grants awarded April 6

LPEF Board members fanned out across the District to award 21 grants for classroom innovation. **See details on Page 3.**

Also Inside:

- Join us for Thank a Teacher Day May 2
- Bowtie Classic set for Sept. 2
- Fundraising for grand piano at Logan Middle tops \$42,000
- Grants Award Luncheon celebrates teachers, supporters



The Logan Middle School Auditorium is one of the best performance spaces on the North Side, and is the main venue for bands and choirs from both Logan High and Logan Middle.

A grand piano is coming to the great hall at Logan Middle School

Generous community donors - spurred by a challenge from David Marck, a La Crosse native who is an acclaimed jazz pianist - raised more than \$42,000 to purchase and maintain a grand piano for the Logan Middle School Auditorium.

Of the total, \$23,000 came from the Bob and Jean Marck Family Fund of the La Crosse Community Foundation, which was established in memory of the longtime owners and operators of Community Camera in Downtown La Crosse. Bob Marck passed away in 2010 and Jean in 2013. Most of the remaining funds were raised through a fundraising campaign led by the La Crosse Public Education Foundation.

The School District of La Crosse has been gradually working to restore the Logan Middle School Auditorium with improved sound and lighting. Currently, the only piano available is an upright piano, which is not acoustically loud enough to be heard over large instrument ensembles, nor is it suitable for collegiate or professional use.

In 2015, David Marck had the opportunity to tour the auditorium and see first-hand the potential for a grand piano for the great hall. His family initially pledged \$10,000 if a similar amount could be raised from other donors — and later increased that with added grants.

“Our folks strongly believed that the Coulee Region is an extraordinary place to live and work, to grow and thrive,” said David Marck. “They felt deeply about the need to make community connections while having fun doing it. My sisters and I are grateful to continue their joyous legacy by helping with this project.”

The new piano will be installed this summer and a dedication ceremony is being planned for early September with an after-school workshop for students led by David Marck. Details on the event, and recognition for all of the donors who supported the project, will be available at a later date.



A Yamaha grand piano like this model will be installed at Logan Middle.

LPEF obtains \$4,000 grant for special needs seating alternatives

Students with special needs in the School District of La Crosse will get a chance to test a variety of seating options that allow greater movement and a chance to burn excess energy as a result of a grant obtained by the La Crosse Public Education Foundation.

The \$4,000 grant was made by the La Crosse Community Foundation Mary Grace Sieber Fund. The fund honors Mary Grace Sieber, who died in 1994

after living over 50 years with effects from severe polio. She lived a full life, including working 40 years at



Mary Grace Sieber

Wettstein's. The fund supports projects to help young people with physical, emotional, or mental disabilities lead more independent and full lives.

LPEF worked with Resa Hawes, the District's autism and intellectual disabilities program support teacher, to apply for the grant. Hawes and her colleagues will purchase a variety of “wobble” chairs and other dynamic seating options. Research shows the different chairs increase student motivation and engagement, leading to better oxygen flow to the brain, and improved core strength and overall posture. This physical activity is also linked to increased academic performance, better health, and improved behavior.

2nd round of classroom grants brings total to \$61,403

Innovative classroom programs, including multiple efforts to address complex academic, emotional and behavioral issues facing students, are among 21 grants totaling \$32,982 announced April 6 by the La Crosse Public Education Foundation.

The 21 grants were chosen from among 25 applications totaling more than \$53,500. Grants are selected for funding based on creativity, ability to engage students, and the total impact or reach of the project. This second round of grants brings the total awarded this school year to \$61,403.

Here is a brief summary of the 21 grants.

Emerson Elementary

- \$819 to buy standing desks for special education students. *This grant is underwritten by the Bonney Family Fund at the La Crosse Community Foundation.*
- \$528 to purchase books to engage students in literacy and math together, helping them make the connections between math and real life.

Hamilton/SOTA I Elementary

- \$2,500 for Hokki stools and a variety of other seating options.
- \$1,000 to offer activities and field trips during the summer session. *This grant is underwritten by former LPEF Board President Rachel Gundersen.*

Hintgen Elementary

- \$4,374 for six teachers to attend a Responsive Classroom workshop.
- \$2,500 to support the Hintgen Urban Garden project. *This grant is underwritten by the Dr. Gunnar and Mary Baldwin Gundersen Fund at the La Crosse Community Foundation.*

Integrated Supports/BGC Erickson

- \$1,189 to buy a variety of manipulatives, games and stress relievers.
- \$561 to buy a starter aquarium, fish, seeds and grow lights to create an aquaponics program.



A first-round grant recipient, Summit Elementary Teacher Mary Her Zong (in Cat in the Hat costume), is helping her English Language Learners students become more fluent through play-acting scripts. Here are students performing their first Reader's Theater wearing masks they made for characters. Mary's grant for \$1,728 was underwritten by Wells Fargo.

Logan Middle

- \$1,500 to purchase alternative seating and "fidgets."
- \$1,200 for summer school materials to improve reading/math skills.
- \$1,127 to purchase upgraded mouthpieces and ligatures for school instruments. *This grant is underwritten in part by the McGavock Family Endowment for Music Education.*

North Woods International

- \$5,000 to support training for a service dog to work with special education and regular students.
- \$2,500 for tables and materials to provide flexibility for encouraging team-based collaborative learning.
- \$1,647 to purchase Hokki stools to expand alternative seating in a kindergarten classroom.

Southern Bluffs

- \$1,158 to provide alternative seating, allowing students to choose options that best fit their bodies.

Spence

- \$2,000 to provide training for two teachers in mind-body wellness practices they will share with other teachers and students.
- \$678 for materials to engage students in balance/visual exercises.
- \$600 to purchase hands-on musical instruments for a classroom teacher to use in regular instruction.
- \$197 for an online learning program to help students manage stress and cultivate social skills.

State Road/Hamilton

- \$1,259 to purchase Hokki stools and standing desks for use by regular and special education students at State Road and Hamilton.

Summit

- \$644 to purchase two sets of "Put In Cups" for students and staff to create art displays in chain link fences around playgrounds.

Learn more about classroom grants at: LaCrosseEducationFoundation.org

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Excellence and equity highlighted at annual Grants Award Luncheon

More than 200 community members and School District of La Crosse employees came together in a celebration of public schools at the annual Grants Award Luncheon hosted by the La Crosse Public Education Foundation.

The luncheon — presented by Festival Foods — celebrates teachers, staff, students and community members whose grant requests provide examples of the kind of creativity and dedication seen every day in the School District of La Crosse.

In all, nearly 70 teachers and other grant recipients were recognized during the Jan. 16 event, which also saluted three special award winners:

Corporate Partner in Education — Festival Foods and Dave and Barb Skogen

Leadership Award — Annette O'Hern, the District's supervisor of Career and Choice Education

Distinguished Service Award — Gregory Bonney, former LPEF Board president and an attorney at Johns, Flaherty & Collins

Superintendent of Schools Randy Nelson was the featured speaker, talking about the need for the District to address systemic issues with inequities in our schools — and in our community. "Our schools are reflected in our community, and our community is reflected in our schools," Nelson said.



Superintendent Randy Nelson (center) presents the Corporate Partner in Education Award to Barb and Dave Skogen. (Diane Gebhart photo)

Special Thanks to our Luncheon Sponsor



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Carol Taebel (left) enjoys a laugh at the 2016 Thank A Teacher Day with teachers Jocelyn Buxton (center) and Summer Elston at North Woods International School.

Thank a Teacher Day is May 2

Teachers give so much to our children every day, so it seems the least we can do is thank them — and all the teaching assistants, food service staff, custodians, administrative assistants, nurses, principals and other staff who make a difference every day in the lives of our children.

The community is being asked to join us on Tuesday, May 2 to show appreciation for teachers and all school staff during the third annual Thank a Teacher Day in La Crosse Public Schools. Volunteers organized by the La Crosse Public Education Foundation will fan out to 15 locations, delivering muffins, donuts and fresh fruit for staff as part of Thank a Teacher Day.

Treats for nearly 1,000 employees of the School District of La Crosse will be provided via grant support from the La Crosse Community Foundation's Carol and Duane Taebel Family Fund. Other community volunteers will participate, including representatives from the District Wide Parent Committee, as well as Rotary Interact Clubs from Central and Logan high schools.

Parents and students, as well as members of the general public, are encouraged to join in the celebration – whether joining LPEF volunteers to help hand out treats before school, or making other personal gestures to Thank a Teacher.

Want to volunteer? Call our office at 787-0226 or email Executive Director David Stoeffler at david@lacrosseeducationfoundation.org.



At 2016 event: North Woods student Kylie Devine thanks her teachers "for being the best teachers on earth."

Bowtie golf outing set for Sept. 2

Registration is open for the fifth annual Charlie Miller Bowtie Classic Golf Outing and Knowledge Open. The event honors the late

Dr. Charles Miller III, who served 15 years on the Board of Education and was a



Dr. Charles Miller

co-founder of the La Crosse Public Education Foundation.

Teams compete on golf skills and general knowledge questions asked by honor students. Each team plays for a La Crosse school, with prize money going to the school for classroom projects. Last year's event raised about \$24,000 for LPEF programs.

Join the fun Saturday, Sept. 2 at the Forest Hills Golf Course in La Crosse, with a shotgun start at 9 a.m. Registration is \$85, with an early bird rate of \$75 before July 1. Special rates are available for a limited number of school-organized teams through sponsor support from Fowler & Hammer.

For information and registration forms, contact us or go to: La-CrosseEducationFoundation.org/charles-miller-bowtie-classic

The presenting sponsor is GO Riteway Transportation Group, which is celebrating its 60th year in business. This is GO Riteway's second year as the La Crosse district's busing provider.



La Crosse Public Education Foundation
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More than \$61,000 in classroom grants awarded this year in La Crosse public schools!
READ MORE DETAILS INSIDE

LPEF grant, community donations will help students get wireless internet access at home

The La Crosse Public Education Foundation has approved a \$3,000 grant to the School District of La Crosse to help students get wireless internet access away from school.

The District provides equal opportunity for students with its 1:1 technology initiative – laptops for high school students and iPads for students in grades 5-8. But about 30% of students do not have wireless internet access at home. To provide equity, the District is planning to offer wireless hotspots for students to check out. The mobile devices have content filtering so inappropriate content cannot be accessed, just as students are limited when at school.

The LPEF grant, along with \$525 raised thus far from the community, will support at least 10 hotspots. Each device will cost about \$350 per school year – and the District estimates a need for nearly 100 (20 per high school, 10 per middle school and 3 per elementary school). For more information on how to help, contact LPEF Executive Director David Stoeffler at (608) 787-0226 or at the email address below.



Wireless internet access will be offered to students through devices like this.

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To support innovation and Random Acts of Kindness in La Crosse public schools through a gift to LPEF, scan the code below with your smartphone.



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