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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 28, 2019

OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES, VIRTUAL REALITY SYSTEM AMONG \$36,000 IN 'GOLD STAR GRANTS' AWARDED TO LA CROSSE EDUCATORS

LA CROSSE, WI, March 28, 2019 – Funding for snowshoes, equipment for a field research camp and money to provide a full-day of outdoor experiences for special education students are among 24 grants totaling more than \$36,000 announced today by the La Crosse Public Education Foundation (LPEF).

Among the latest Gold Star Grants are projects for virtual reality equipment for use at all three middle schools, and money for a wide variety of science, music, arts and literature projects, and a trip for all third-grade students to attend a special compassion and kindness exhibit at the Children's Museum of La Crosse.

The 24 grants were chosen from among 29 applications requesting more than \$62,000. Grants are selected for funding based on creativity, ability to engage students and the total impact or reach of the project. This is the second round of LPEF grants for this school year, bringing the total to almost \$80,000. The LPEF Board has been aggressively increasing funding for Gold Star Grants. Five years ago, the total awarded was \$43,000.

"We're excited to see the amazing things teachers are doing to bring new experiences to students in our public schools," said Rochelle Nicks, LPEF Board President and development director for Catholic Charities of La Crosse.

Here is a brief summary of the 24 grants, totaling \$36,384, announced today in surprise visits to recipients:

- \$5,000 to support purchase of a wireless microphone system to be used for theater productions at all district schools. The system addresses a major need to improve audience enjoyment of District theater performances. Funding supplements a major grant received from the La Crosse Community Foundation. Recipient: Timothy Sprain. *This grant is underwritten in part by Independent Cycle & ATV.*
- \$3,940 to purchase a Virtual Reality system for use by Lincoln, Longfellow and Logan middle schools as a STEM education tool that focuses on the eight key Science and Engineering practices. The VR system will improve student science practices and motivation. Recipient: Timothy Sprain. *This grant is underwritten in part by Modern Crane Service.*
- \$2,500 to buy books for teacher professional development at Northside/Coulee Montessori Elementary School on how to integrate English Language Arts and Social Studies subject matter into classrooms. Recipient: Shelly Long. *This grant is underwritten by the Richard Swantz Endowment Fund of the La Crosse Community Foundation, a fund created by and in honor of the former school superintendent to support staff development.*
- \$2,039 to purchase transportation for all 3rd-grade students in the District to experience "XOXO: An Exhibit about Love and Forgiveness." This exhibit at the Children's Museum of La Crosse provides activities and experiences about compassion, respect, kindness, inclusion, love and forgiveness. Recipient: Tracy Taylor-Johnson, Summit Environmental Elementary School. *This grant is underwritten in part by Wells Fargo.*

- \$2,000 to host the Limanya African Drum and Dance Troupe to perform for middle and elementary students, and provide professional development for general music teachers. Recipient: Mary Stutesman, Longfellow and Logan Middle School. *This grant is awarded in part from memorial gifts in honor of Madelynn Melby, a longtime teacher of music in area schools and mentor to other educators. She died in March 2018.*
- \$2,000 to help purchase risers for the general music, choir, and adaptive music students at Longfellow Middle School. LPEF funding will supplement school and parent funding, and match a grant from the Marck Family Fund at the La Crosse Community Foundation. Recipient: Marlina Zimmerman. *This grant is underwritten in part by Gillette & Associates CPAs.*
- \$1,967 to buy young adult level books about immigration and family for a summer professional development experience. About 110 participating teachers from several district schools will experience ways to integrate technology (such as video) into lessons, and leave with a toolbox of templates and strategies for classrooms. Recipient: Joshua Wolcott, School of Technology & Arts II.
- \$1,900 to purchase materials to create social-emotional learning kits to help increase student self-management and self-awareness. This completes a project partially funded by an LPEF grant last year. The addition of five kits will enable each elementary school to have a kit. Recipient: Resa Hawes.
- \$1,594 to support a Spence Elementary School project to buy Flip Form risers to be used in the music room and at school events. The risers are versatile, maximize space and are easy to move. The LPEF grant will buy two sets of risers to supplement those purchased through school and parent funding. Recipient: Amy Johnson-Pierce.
- \$1,500 to partner with Ajamou Butler, Founder of Heal the Hood, to guide Hamilton Elementary School 3rd- through 5th-graders in writing their future story. Students will participate in writing workshops and create a picture book illustrating their own future story. Recipient: Carrie Wuensch-Harden.
- \$1,500 to buy art materials for Logan Middle School students to use in identifying words, images, and ideas they associate with themselves. Students will create an identity torso to encourage critical thinking and explore messages they hear and read. Recipients: Dani Hartman, Heidi Jones and Scott Baker. *This grant is underwritten by former LPEF Board President Rachel Gundersen and the LPEF Rachel Gundersen Endowment for the Arts & Humanities.*
- \$1,273 to purchase camping equipment, solar panels and a portable power supply needed for outdoor experiences for students from 7 Rivers Community High School, Central and Logan high schools. Students will connect with the outdoors and conduct science and field research. Recipients: Andy Hartman and Keachen Abing, 7 Rivers Community High School. *This grant is underwritten by the Dr. Gunnar and Mary Baldwin Gundersen Fund at the La Crosse Community Foundation.*
- \$1,200 to provide continuing support for a program to increase the number of teachers of color by focusing on teaching assistants and others already working for the School District of La Crosse and helping them earn full education degrees at UW-L. This is the fourth year of LPEF funding for the program. Recipient: Mai Chao Duddeck, UW-La Crosse.
- \$1,000 to partner with the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra to share a symphony learning experience with 3rd- through 5th-grade students throughout the District. Students will learn about the symphony, the instruments, music, etiquette, and appropriate conduct. Recipient: Jan Lea Brock and the La Crosse Symphony Education Committee. *This grant is underwritten in part by the LPEF McGavock Family Endowment for Music Education.*
- \$1,000 to buy painting materials to create a sensory pathway on the playground at Summit Environmental School to inspire movement, develop coordination skills and promote self-regulation.

The pathway will include the Zones of Regulation to promote social-emotional and regulation development in students. Recipients: Nicole Kuecker, Lisa Boyer, Lindsey Shay and Nick O'Keefe.

- \$1,000 to purchase diverse seating options for students in a Hamilton Elementary School classroom with limited space. Students will have varied seating options, which allow for movement, comfort and choices - creating a positive classroom environment. Recipient: Carter Semb.
- \$1,000 to provide a full-day of outdoor experiential learning at Camp Decorah for Logan High School special education students. Students will experience the outdoors while turning off technology and participate in activities that provide a feeling of accomplishment, relationship and team building skills, and multiple sensory engagement. Recipients: Gregory Milligan and Phillip Klar.
- \$844 to purchase 20 pairs of snowshoes to enable an entire Logan High School class to participate in winter activities for exercise and exposure to natural surroundings. Recipient: Jodi Mahlum.
- \$700 to buy materials for a hands-on construction approach to teaching geometry at Lincoln Middle/Coulee Montessori/SOTA II. Students will use recycled materials to design, solve, and build 3-D life-sized structures and then share their stories about the experience. Recipients: Ruth Baardseth, Scott Bagniefski and Mary Sue Pintz.
- \$692 to purchase books for Summit Environmental Elementary School students that help them understand and develop empathy and emotional intelligence skills. These skills allow students to better understand the perspective of others. Recipients: Tracy Taylor-Johnson and Darcy Maxwell. *This grant is underwritten in part by a gift from the Tom & Judy Sleik Family Fund of the La Crosse Community Foundation.*
- \$512 to buy an assessment kit and materials for use with Logan Middle School students with scotopic sensitivity syndrome, which causes sensitivity to light and makes it difficult to see text clearly. Color overlays are placed over the text to assist with reading. Recipients: Diane Block and Nicole Kuecker.
- \$500 to purchase Stimulating Maturity Through Accelerated Readiness Training materials and set up a course in the hallway at Hamilton Elementary School. The course will activate students' brains for learning; reducing time spent in the classroom trying to re-regulate. Recipient: Jennifer Speckeen.
- \$424 to purchase OSMO learning systems to increase learning experiences for special education students at Summit Environmental Elementary School. The OSMO systems connect to iPads to provide targeted learning in basic math, money concepts, spatial relationships, spelling and following directions. Recipients: Megan Meyer, Caitlin Hanney and Kasey Pomeroy.
- \$300 to buy vinyl adhesive signs with positive affirmations to display in bathrooms at Southern Bluffs Elementary School. The affirmations will help to improve student resilience, establish a growth-mindset, and encourage students to be their best. Recipient: Casey Scheuerell.

In addition to about \$80,000 this school year in Gold Star Grants, LPEF provides other support for La Crosse schools, including about \$30,000 for Random Acts of Kindness to meet needs of students in areas such as nutrition, hygiene, clothing, and transportation. In total, through the support of generous donors, LPEF will provide about \$350,000 in aid to the District this year. LPEF's mission is to enhance learning opportunities for students in the School District of La Crosse and to promote community support for public education. For more information, contact the LPEF office at 787-0226, or email David Stoeffler at:

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