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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 5, 2019

INCLUSIVE PROJECTS FOR ARTS AND ATHLETICS AMONG 27 'GOLD STAR GRANTS' AWARDED BY LPEF

LA CROSSE, WI, December 5, 2019 – Funding for adaptive athletic equipment, including sport wheelchairs and inclusive cardio fitness machines, are among 27 grants totaling nearly \$44,000 announced today by the La Crosse Public Education Foundation (LPEF).

Among the latest Gold Star Grants are projects to help students learn about local African-American history, to experience virtual reality settings across the globe, to expand availability of books on topics ranging from science to poverty, and to provide an inclusive art experience for special needs students.

The 27 grants were chosen from among 50 applications requesting more than \$100,000. Grants are selected for funding based on creativity, ability to engage students, and the total impact or reach of the project. This is the first round of LPEF Gold Star Grants this school year, with a second round expected to be awarded in April.

"These grants go to the heart of our mission to enhance learning opportunities, and the teachers seem to make our task of choosing recipients more difficult every year," said Rochelle Nicks, LPEF Board President and Director of Mission Advancement for the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration.

Here is a brief summary of the 27 grants, totaling \$43,961, announced today in surprise visits to recipients:

- \$5,000 to provide matching funds toward purchase of two recumbent cross training inclusive cardio trainers for use by Central and Logan high school students with a disability or a condition that requires adaptive cardio fitness equipment for pain relief and fitness. The grant is a partial match to funding provided by the La Crosse Community Foundation. Recipient: Jessa Ellenbecker. *This grant is underwritten by Festival Foods.*
- \$4,000 to bring Zot Artz, a traveling inclusive art experience, to La Crosse to allow special education and special needs students to participate in a fun and creative art experience, leading to a community art show. Recipient: Lindsey Shay, a physical therapist working with special education students throughout the District. *This grant is underwritten in part by the Duane and Carol Taebel Fund of the La Crosse Community Foundation.*
- \$2,900 to purchase books and support a visit to Hamilton/SOTA I by author Julia Cook who will present at a family night, meet with staff and engage with students to encourage social/emotional learning and character development. Recipient: Carrie Wuensch-Harden. *This grant is underwritten in part by Dairyland Power Cooperative.*
- \$2,530 to purchase a washer and dryer for use by Logan High students so that the most vulnerable students will be able to wear clean clothes on a daily basis. Recipient: Cynthia Leiran-Monroe. *This grant is underwritten in part by Fowler & Hammer.*

- \$2,500 to bring artist in residence Gena Ollendieck to Summit Environmental School for a week to share ways to repurpose discarded and found objects and create art. Recipient: Carissa Brudos.
- \$2,500 to provide matching grant funding to upgrade equipment and increase safety and usability for all students using the Logan High weight room. Recipient: Jordan Gilge. *This grant is underwritten in part by Wells Fargo.*
- \$2,000 to provide a matching grant toward buying sport wheelchairs for Unified Physical Education classes in middle schools and high schools to provide inclusive experiences for disabled and non-disabled students alike. This grant is a partial match to a major grant awarded by Mayo Clinic Health System-Franciscan Healthcare. Recipients: Jessa Ellenbecker and Melissa Norman. *This grant is underwritten in part by Trust Point.*
- \$1,999 to purchase Ozobots, robots that can be programmed without use of a computer or iPad, to provide an introduction to coding to 7th-grade math students at Lincoln Middle School. Recipient: Courtney Vail. *This grant is underwritten in part by Mayo Clinic Health System-Franciscan Healthcare.*
- \$1,750 to buy flags and performance uniforms for a new Winter Guard flag and dance choreography team open to all middle school students. Recipient: Jason Harden, Lincoln Middle School. *This grant is underwritten in part by Altra Federal Credit Union.*
- \$1,700 to purchase a set of whiteboard tables for a 7th-grade math and science classroom at Logan Middle, replacing damaged tables with spaces to encourage collaboration and creativity, allowing students to draw, write and display their work without using paper. Recipient: Jennifer Appel. *This grant is underwritten in part by Kaplan Professional Education.*
- \$1,698 to buy a set of virtual reality headsets to allow Hintgen Elementary special education students to experience settings outside the classroom and across the globe. Recipients: Courtney Kirker, Emily Juneau and Kali O'Neil. *This grant is underwritten in part by LHI.*
- \$1,606 to purchase materials for a garden and science connected curriculum led by GROW La Crosse at Emerson, Hamilton/SOTA I, Hintgen and State Road schools. Recipient: Jamie O'Neill, GROW La Crosse.
- \$1,575 to fund Logan High School student research, patent search and development of a prototype for either a hydration bladder volume monitor or a wireless game controller self charger. Recipient: Steve Johnston. *This grant is underwritten in part by State Bank Financial.*
- \$1,500 to partner with the *Enduring Families Project* and community organizations to create video monologues and lesson plans that bring the voices of historical local African American people into the Social Studies curriculum. Recipients: Sandy Brauer, Mary Nelson, Wendy Mattison and Julie Welch. *This grant is underwritten in part by Coulee Bank.*
- \$1,500 to buy materials to build sound-absorbing panels for the Hintgen Elementary gymnasium, and decorate with inspirational tapestries, making the space more usable for assemblies and community groups who currently struggle to use the gym because of poor acoustics. Recipient: Sonya Mahlum. *This grant is awarded in honor of Dr. Tom Thompson, who retired from the Board of Education in April after 15 years of service. Grants support was provided by Fowler & Hammer.*
- \$1,275 to purchase the book *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* for a group read by Advanced Placement English Language and Composition students at Central to enlighten students about systemic issues of poverty and to participate in in-depth discussion. Recipient: Kim Butterfield. *This grant is underwritten in part by Gundersen Health System.*
- \$1,200 to purchase books for science classrooms at Logan High School, providing content-related materials and high-interest titles that will engage more students in reading. Recipient: Katherine Keeney. *This grant is underwritten in part by Mathy Construction.*
- \$1,100 to purchase copies of the book *Educated* by Tara Westover for AVID students and staff at Logan High to provide a college-level experience by doing a group read of this memoir about education, first-generation college students and the trauma of racism. Recipient: Carrie Harings.

- \$896 to buy a teen literacy library to help Longfellow Middle School students develop social skills, promote resiliency and build emotional health and self-confidence. Recipient: Barb Secord. *This grant is underwritten by Mooresmiles.*
- \$877 to buy a hydroponic and aeroponic growing system to help Logan Middle School students gain analytical and critical thinking skills while growing consumable plants. Recipient: Lee Ann Honey-Brittenham.
- \$864 to provide transportation for 44 students from middle school and high school to attend the 2020 Teen Literature Convention in the Twin Cities and be able to engage with authors and share the joy of reading and writing. Recipient: Cynthia Halter. *This grant is underwritten in part by the LPEF Judy and Randy Eddy Sr. Fund.*
- \$728 for two teachers from Hintgen Elementary to attend a 2-day training and purchase Bal-A-Vis-X equipment for student exercises that encourage cooperative interaction, attention, balance and motor coordination, leading to increased attention and focus in class. Recipients: Brooke Boisvert and Kerry Kost. *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 recently deceased former school superintendent to support staff development.*
- \$710 for La Crosse Design Institute students to participate in *The Changemaker Project* to explore social justice issues through a design thinking lens. At the conclusion, 2-5 students will pitch their ideas virtually to venture capitalists and philanthropists who may choose to provide funding. Recipient: Maggie McHugh.
- \$527 to purchase materials to create "Investigation Kits" for International Baccalaureate students at North Woods to explore prior to each unit and develop their "wonder" questions about what they would like to learn. Recipients: Tara Schuttenhelm, Leah Justin and Nicole Brudos. *This grant is awarded in honor of Heidi Morris, who retired as a North Woods teacher in June after 19 years of service to the School District of La Crosse. Grants support was provided by Fowler & Hammer.*
- \$400 to purchase dual-language books written by author Angela Dominguez who will visit elementary schools and share how to write and illustrate a book. Recipient: Kristen Martin, State Road Elementary on behalf of all elementary schools.
- \$375 to purchase food and supplies for 5 transdisciplinary cooking lessons so that North Woods International students are able to safely provide for themselves when their families aren't present. Recipient: Katie Pierre.
- \$251 to purchase music and materials for use by music and physical education classes at North Woods International, to be used in teaching a variety of dances from around the world. Recipients: Amanda Wolfgram and Joshua Hein.

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 LPEF at 787-0226, or email David Stoeffler at: david@lacrosseeducationfoundation.org.

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