

Education

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said Franklin Public Schools community experience coordinator Andrew Thompson in an email. “We can all learn from each other as we work towards the common goal of making our community a better place to live.”

Brown Deer Schools Superintendent Monica Kelsey-Brown said she likes the Brown Deer Education Foundation’s willingness to help students in securing scholarships for postsecondary education, which include options beyond four-year colleges such as the skilled trades.

“We’ve created that space to be able to meet the needs of students whose passions lie in different spaces. The ed foundation being willing to be responsive to what that could look like moving forward; I think that is so powerful. Those individuals continue to go out and spread the word as well about what the ed foundation is trying to do,” she said.

Kelsey-Brown also said the foundation has been great for the district’s teachers.

“The fact that we have two arms — the student side of the ed foundation and also the teacher side of the ed foundation — because we all know without teachers, we all may as well hang up our hats and go home,” Kelsey-Brown said.

Menomonee Falls High School principal Bob Vitale said the school is grateful for the work the Menomonee Falls Scholarship and Education Foundation does for students.

“It is an extremely strong foundation and its roots are very deep. How they give back to our kids and our schools; I don’t know how many other school districts have a foundation like that that gives back,” said Vitale.

Examples of projects funded by fundraising, grants

Education foundations’ fundraising efforts and grant programs have funded a variety of projects.

For example, the Milwaukee Public Schools Foundation has helped fund a \$3.5 million project to upgrade five outdoor spaces, including a playground on the south side of the city and a track on the north side, according to the foundation’s 2021 Impact Report.



Menomonee Falls High School principal Bob Vitale (right) hands a scholarship award to a student during Menomonee Falls High School's scholarship awards presentation in 2021. SUBMITTED

“The new spaces promote outdoor learning, healthy food access, social-emotional well-being, recreational opportunities, arts, and environmental sustainability through stormwater management and increased urban biodiversity,” the report said.

A fundraising campaign by the Fox Point-Bayside Education Foundation conducted over two years helped raise \$210,000 to build new, accessible playgrounds at both Stormonth Elementary and Bayside Middle School. That exceeded the group’s goal of \$100,000.

“We typically bring in from our event and can hand over from the district \$60,000, but we had an anonymous donor last year put up \$100,000. So that was on top of the money we had already raised the year before and then what we would normally expect from the year, so we did quite well for our playgrounds,” Kruger-Gruendyke said. “Playgrounds are expensive. Not many people would imagine that. I certainly didn’t know that.”

The Wauwatosa Education Foundation awarded \$50,275 in grants to teachers Tom Schneider and Tina Koch to bring an Anatomage Virtual Lab Table, which is an interactive, digital device that “allows students to gain a comprehensive understanding of anatomy, pathology and even surgical planning, provides life-size modeling of the body’s systems and offers hands-on

dissectible human and animal cadavers in precise 3D digital imagery.” The table is available for students throughout the district in several classes and is housed at Wauwatosa West High School.

“Only a handful of other high schools in the country have this resource, usually found at the world’s leading medical schools and institutions,” said the Wauwatosa Education Foundation’s website.

Foundations have also funded smaller projects. For example, the Oconomowoc Public Education Foundation donated \$7,000 to the nonprofit organization The Oasis Project to expand its tutoring services to all four district elementary schools. The tutors work with first- and second-graders at those schools. The organization provides tutoring services through retired teachers to help economically disadvantaged and other at-risk children to close learning gaps.

The Mequon-Thiensville Education Foundation awarded a \$2,500 grant for the 2020-21 school year to provide materials for an Advanced Placement Computer Science course.

Even smaller projects costing hundreds of dollars have been funded, such as the Waukesha Education Foundation awarding \$205 for materials such as math and reading games and hands-on learning tools for 4K students at Lowell Elementary School in Waukesha to play

in small groups during rotational center time.

Scholarships

Raising money for student scholarships is another focus for education foundations. They often focus on providing funds to help students go to college, technical school and even to pursue careers in the trades depending on the foundation’s setup.

The Menomonee Falls Scholarship & Education Foundation sees awarding scholarships as a key priority.

“We are huge into scholarships,” said Lynn Zindl, the foundation’s secretary and treasurer.

Zindl said her foundation will give 49 \$1,000 scholarships to students, as well as seven most-improved scholarships for \$1,000 each and four career tech scholarships also for \$1,000 each this year. She also said district alumni and families have also set up scholarships in their names for students to apply to.

“The amounts every year vary depending on the number of applications we have,” Zindl noted.

To award the students their scholarships, Zindl said the foundation holds an annual scholarship auction, which will be brought back this year after the pandemic canceled the 2020 and 2021 versions.

For the event, tickets are sold and items are secured for a silent auction, raffles and voice auction, and there are different games like bags. Students help sell raffle tickets and work the voice auction. Each auction raises between \$40,000 and \$50,000, according to Zindl.

Zindl also said a house was built and sold about 15 years ago. The foundation took the money from the sale and invested it — with big benefits for students.

“We have been able to give \$60,000 for the last two years off our interest on our investment,” Zindl explained.

Fundraising events

To raise money, foundations often hold drives through events such as golf outings, dinners, galas, festivals, silent auctions and more.

For example, the Oak Creek-Franklin Education will hold its Art in the Park event this year from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sat-

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