

The Okemos Education Foundation has been raising funds from our community to support Okemos students since its inception in 1984. This financial support hits a milestone this year, as we pass the \$1,000,000 mark in support of academic excellence. The level of grant and program funding has fluctuated each year, depending on requests from teachers, the development of new programs, and the level of need from the district. In the early years of the foundation, the grant totals were relatively low, averaging just \$6,300 annually for the first 18 years. But the state's



The OEF Surpasses \$1 Million in Support to Okemos Public Schools

financial climate changed in 2003, and the OEF was called upon to increase its level of giving in response to an ever-growing gap between our district's needs and dollars coming into the district from state and other funding sources. **Since 2003, the OEF has given an average of over \$77,000 annually** to support academic excellence, to ensure the continuation of valuable extra-curricular student programs, and to fulfill our mission of "recognizing excellence and promoting innovation in Okemos Public Schools."

A million thanks to our donors for helping us reach this impressive milestone!

Inside: Focus on Student Clubs.....How 2013 bond funds are being put to good use...This year's OEF approved grants...Our 'Partners in Education' donor list... and more!

The Need Continues...

As the OEF has increased its level of support to our schools, the level of incoming donations has not kept pace with the growing need. For the past five years, contributions to the OEF have been lower than the outgoing funding to our schools. The OEF began funding extra-curricular student clubs in the 2009-2010 academic year, and we significantly

"The Earth Club gives students with some interest or concern about our environment a place to explore, learn about, express ideas, and take positive action related to environmental topics. With all the curriculum pressures from state and national standards, less attention has been given in our curriculum to environmental issues in recent years. Students seem to understand less about those issues than a few years ago. But they still have a sense that the environment is important and many want to do something to protect and even improve it. They need more understanding of the issues and they need a venue to explore and act on those concerns."

Dave Chapman, OHS Earth Club advisor

increased that funding in 2011-2012 to meet the budget crisis that threatened to cut all clubs and student organizations. The OEF stepped in to cover the costs of groups

such as OHS ACTION, the elementary Safety Patrol program, Chieftain Champs,

"I love working with ACTION. Not only does it give me a chance to work in the community, it also allows me to get to know OHS students on a personal level outside of the classroom. I get to see students giving back and I get to see their kind hearts. After any event I attend, I leave feeling proud."

Rachel Freeman-Baldwin, ACTION advisor

OHS Connect, as well as numerous after-school clubs that give our students the opportunity to explore their passions and talents outside of the normal academic schedule. The OEF dug into its financial reserves to meet this need, believing in the importance of these programs and hoping that the financial climate would change in favor of public schools in the near future. But that change has not happened. State funding levels continue to prevent the

"Many of these students feel like they are different and don't belong or fit in with their peers. GSA provides an accepting, non-judgmental space for these students to be who they are."

Katie Alexander, OHS Counselor and club advisor to the Gay/Straight Alliance

district from being able to fund programs that were once eliminated from its budget, so the OEF is being asked to continue to provide the almost \$50,000 needed to fund these extra-curricular clubs and student organizations. And that's in addition to the classroom grants, awards, author visits, and

"I believe students need a safe place to share their interests which might not be main stream like sports, etc."

Cyndi Webster, Chippewa Coding Club advisor

other program costs that the OEF already provides. ***We need your help to be able to continue to support Okemos students at the same level as in recent years.*** Please donate to the OEF General Fund today! Use the donation form on the outside cover of this newsletter or visit our website **www.oefsite.org** to make an online donation.

"Starting children with healthy exercise habits early will benefit them throughout their lives. Introducing fifth and sixth graders to the sport of cross country could also help the Chippewa and Okemos High School teams. During the season I chatted with Mr. Brian Harrod, the OHS cross country coach, about how some of his sophomores and freshman had been running cross country for four or five years already, and his response was, "It shows!" That wouldn't be possible without [the OEF's support]."

Marian Murembya, Kinawa Cross Country coach

1,900 students participate in OEF-funded clubs and student organizations.

2014-2015 OEF-Sponsored Clubs: **\$48,800**

OHS

- ACTION (community service)
- Quiz Bowl
- Asian Club
- Connect (OHS freshmen orientation/mentoring program)
- Drama Club
- Earth Club
- Gay/Straight Alliance
- Political Club
- SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions)
- World Language Club

Chippewa 7/8

- Art Club
- Computer Coding Club
- Homework Club

Kinawa 5/6

- Archery Club
- Choir Club
- Cross Country Club

Bennett Woods Elementary

- Safety Patrol
- Chieftain Champs

Cornell Elementary

- Safety Patrol
- Chieftain Champs

Hiawatha Elementary

- Safety Patrol
- Chieftain Champs

Okemos Public Montessori at Central (OPM)

- Safety Patrol
- Culinary Club

Club Spotlight: *Chieftain Champs*

The OEF always strives to use its donations to benefit the largest number of students. One of the best examples of this is our support of the Chieftain Champs/Homework Club mentoring programs involving over 325 Okemos K-8 and high school students.

These after-school programs are organized by the OHS ACTION (All Connecting To Improve Our Neighborhood) club to provide students at Bennett Woods, Cornell, Hiawatha, and Kinawa 5-6 with weekly mentoring sessions at each school. Chippewa's Homework Club offers a similar experience for our 7th and 8th grade students. Each high school student is assigned one or two younger students whom they meet with once or twice a week after school from November through April.

These sessions give the students an opportunity to establish friendships and provide homework support. The relationships that form between the mentors and the mentees can be so strong that the high school students often pair up with the same elementary students year after year. Notes ACTION advisor Rachel Freeman-Baldwin, "Our mentoring programs allow our high school students a chance to develop real, lasting relationships with elementary students. Over the course of the school year, the high school students see the direct impact they have on the lives of the elementary students.

By the end of the year, most elementary students show gains in social acceptance, academic attitudes, and grades. In turn, our high school students leave with greater confidence and a love for community service. This program is a win-win!"

OEF provides the funds that sponsor the OHS ACTION club, each of the elementary Chieftain Champs clubs, the Chippewa Homework Club, in addition to a micro-grant that provides bus transportation home for the elementary students. Every OEF donor has reason to be

proud that they provide our students with this unique opportunity to discover and grow their talents, develop leadership skills and learn the importance of community service.

"These opportunities are always greeted with excitement by both mentors and mentees," remarked Hiawatha club advisors Julie Bellinger and Lisa Hall. **"We truly want our families to know that without your commitment and support, wonderful programs like Chieftain Champs cannot happen!"**



"When I think about mentoring, I think of unpredictable situations, lots of smiling, and even more laughs. Mentoring is a great atmosphere for not only the children, but also the high-schoolers mentoring them. I mentor because of how beneficial it is for all parties involved; the children complete homework, the mentors gain responsibility, and everyone makes long-lasting memories. There is no better feeling than knowing you have positively impacted a child. The Monday afternoons I spent at Hiawatha are something I will cherish for a long time to come."

Liz Mack, OHS student

"Chippewa's Homework Club is our only after school homework support that is free to our students. Most of these are students that can't afford private tutoring and don't have someone at home that can help them with their homework. Our 7th and 8th graders get more than just tutoring from the high school volunteers. They get advice from someone they will listen to, they get organization tips, they learn about what to expect at the high school and what is expected of them. The high school students also get the benefit of helping someone else, adding to their college applications, and getting ACTION or NHS hours. We greatly appreciate the support of the OEF and feel strongly that we impact the academic success of our students."

*Alison Evenson, Chippewa Counselor
and club advisor*

Quiz Bowl: State Champs... Again!

Quiz Bowl is an academic competition in math, science, history, literature and culture. Students practice weekly and compete in a surprising number of competitions throughout the year. You may have watched the Okemos team on WKAR's Quizbusters show, which is hosted by Okemos High School's own Matt Ottinger. (If you've never seen the show, check it out: you will be impressed by the quick thinking and wide range of knowledge of our students.)

In mid-April, the team participated in the MSU Honors College State Championship Meet, where they competed against 27 other Class A teams for the state title...and won for the second year in a row!

Quiz Bowl has been part of Okemos High School for at least 20 years and is currently coached by OHS German teacher Andrew Floyd, who thoroughly enjoys the club and his students. "My Quiz Bowl students comprise the very best and brightest at OHS, which is saying something," Floyd observes. "These students are so passionate about their studies that they enjoy applying their knowledge outside of the classroom in a fun, competitive environment. They carry themselves with the utmost in class

and sportsmanship, something for which I often receive compliments from opposing coaches. For many of the students, Quiz Bowl is their primary extracurricular, the one they most enjoy. For a few, it is their only extracurricular."

"We are greatly indebted to the OEF for their support of our program and sincerely

hope there is a means by which that support may continue. **OEF-funded clubs enrich the wonderfully unique place that is OHS."**

Congratulations to these outstanding scholars and fine ambassadors of our school and community!



Pictured are Club Advisor Andrew Floyd with students: Ravi Betzig, Kevin Bi, Ricky Li, Scott MacGuidwin (captain), Erik Bubolz, and Netra Murthy

2014 OEF Award Recipients

(in order of photo):

- **Brian Ugorowski**, Technical Director at Okemos High School
- **Derm Clarkin**, Student Supervisor and Athletic Event Supervisor at Okemos High School
- **Renee Maniaci**, Resource Teacher at Okemos High School
- **Chad DeKatch**, Drama Director and Teacher at Okemos High School
- **Andy Moore**, Chemistry and Science Research Seminar Teacher at Okemos High School
- **Elizabeth Clifford**, Okemos parent, received the Volunteer Service Award
- **Jocelyn "J" Mankowski**, 5th Grade Teacher at Kinawa
- **Melissa Allis**, 3rd Grade Teacher at Bennett Woods



The OEF hosted its 18th annual awards banquet on November 20, 2014. Eight extraordinary people were honored for their dedication to Okemos schools.

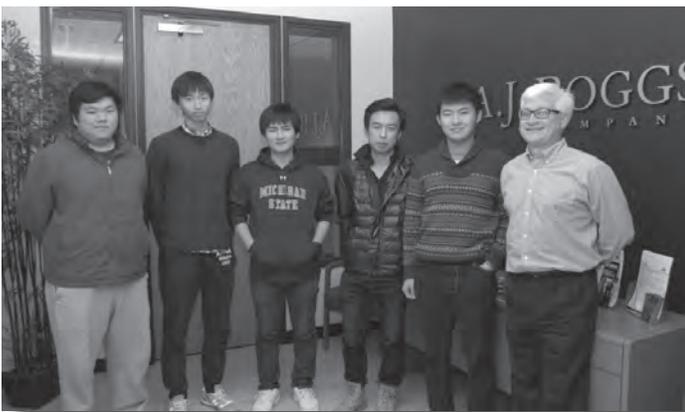
Video footage of this inspiring evening is available on The Okemos Channel (<http://okemoschannel.pegcentral.com/>).

Nomination materials are available (www.oefsite.org) for the 2015 awards (submission deadline: **June 12**). Consider nominating the Okemos staff member who has made a difference in the life of your student.



New Logo, New Website!

You might notice that the OEF has a new look, thanks to a new logo designed by Allegra of Lansing. This change coordinates with the updated website that is soon to launch. We are grateful to Okemos parent, Clarke Anderson of AJ Boggs & Company (www.ajboggs.com), who has advised six MSU students all year as they put a fresh face on the OEF website. The new site, which will remain at www.oefsite.org, contains more photos, more information about the OEF, and is easier to navigate on phones and tablets. Watch our Facebook page for the launch date...then check it out and give us your feedback. We hope it helps you better understand the OEF and the great things that your donations make possible.



Clarke Anderson of AJ Boggs & Company, with 5 of the 6 MSU students who are redeveloping the OEF website. Their compensation? Web development experience and Ghirardelli double-chocolate brownies.

OEF APPLE Awards Make Perfect Year-End Gifts



Don't forget to honor the Okemos staff members who have made an impact on your student's life. OEF APPLE Awards recognize an "Amazing Performance in Promoting Learning and Excellence" and are a perfect way to say "thank you!" for a job well done. Each 5x7 color award is personalized with the name of both the "giver" and the "receiver," along with the reason why the award is being presented. You decide what to say on your award. Some memorable recent reasons include:

"for creating an environment that is both challenging and supportive"

"for being positive and encouraging"

"for making an impressive learning environment which is quite different from China"

"for doing projects with us that are fun!"

What would you say on your award? Over 120 APPLE awards have been distributed in the first year of this new OEF program, each bringing a smile to those they honor. APPLE Awards can be ordered at www.oefsite.org. The \$20 fee for each award is a donation to the OEF, so you are thanking a teacher while also supporting Okemos students.

Order yours today!

Message from Our Superintendent

Here's How You Are Making A Difference!



Dr. Catherine J. Ash, Superintendent of Schools

I want to take this opportunity to thank you, our community, for making a significant difference in the lives of our children! On November 5, 2013, Okemos voters overwhelmingly supported the \$7.5 million bond proposal for the purpose of purchasing technology and school busses, as well as enhancing our security. You saw this as an important and critical component for achieving our mission, "Together... educating with excellence and inspiring learners for life."

Since January, 2014 we have been turning **our** vision into our children's reality! Let me tell you how YOUR commitment to our schools is making a difference in the educational experience of all of our students.

Technology

Bond funds allowed us to purchase new technology, enhancing our ability to deliver relevant and meaningful educational programming and to utilize efficient practices. During the 2014-15 school year, we were able to provide personal learning devices to all of our 7-12 grade students. This technology initiative allows us to provide opportunities for the following:

- Equal access to all students
- Personalization of learning and teaching
- Increased student engagement and achievement
- Development of "universal" skills and competencies for the global workplace



Chippewa students using their new Personal Learning Devices

- Just-in-time student assessment, data gathering, feedback, and adjustments in instruction
- Communication between home and school

Currently, a committee is engaging in a process to identify appropriate personal learning devices for our K-6 students, to research evidence based instructional practices and to develop a plan for on-going professional development to support our teachers and to promote the success of this important initiative.

Security

As promised, we have enhanced our building and classroom security, promoting the continued safety of our students and staff. Specifically, we have increased the number of high resolution security cameras throughout the district. These cameras will provide surveillance of all entry areas, halls, cafeterias, parking lots/drives and playgrounds. The cameras will be used to assist in daily oversight of the buildings and grounds, as well as to monitor after hours building use.

Our exterior electronic lock system has been upgraded and expanded to include more entry doors. The system is tied into our network, allowing for centralized control and lockdowns. We are in the process of installing electronic locks on all of our classrooms, offices, libraries etc...

Again, this will allow for individualized and centralized control of internal lockdowns within our buildings.

In the case of an emergency, the newly expanded security system will help outside agencies manage the situation. Further, we have enhanced our ability to communicate



New interior and exterior door locks for our schools.

quickly and directly with our local Police and Fire Departments.

The security project will be complete by the end of May. Prior to the 2015-16 school year, we will analyze our existing security plans and processes to ensure we have accounted for our new technology and our enhanced capabilities.

(Continued on page 7)

(Superintendent's Message- Continued from page 6)

Transportation

Okemos Public Schools has been able to maintain a safe and efficient bus fleet. The following are direct outcomes of our ability to purchase seven (7) new busses:

- Experience fewer mechanical breakdowns
- Reduced maintenance/labor costs, especially on major items such as, transmissions, major body work, etc. Equipped our entire bus fleet with video/sound surveillance, and GPS tracking which enhances the safety of students
- Meet Federal environmental mandates which translates into cleaner exhaust and better air quality



7 new buses in the OPS fleet

Fiscally Responsible

This source of funding alleviated the need to utilize our general fund for these expenditures, maintaining these funds for our existing programs and services. Our community recognized the positive financial impact of providing this alternative funding source to accommodate our technology, security and transportation needs.

You should know, the passage of this bond proposal is having a positive and profound impact on the educational experience of all of our students. It is certainly a reflection of the value our community places on a quality education.

“Thank you to the Okemos Public Schools’ community! You continue to make a significant difference in the lives of our children.”

-Cathy Ash, Superintendent

Technology/Security/Transportation Bond				
\$7.5 Million: Voter approved November, 2013				
Technology				
Projected Expense:		\$ 5,780,400		
	Number	Actual Expenditures	Pending Expenditures	
Athletic scoreboards	4	\$ 63,327		0
Technology Infrastructure	N/A	\$ 892,547	\$ 66,500	
Additional Classroom Technology	N/A	\$ 594,441	\$ 407,100	
Personal Learning Devices 7-12	1,900	\$ 1,853,046		0
Personal Learning Devices K-6	2,230	0	\$ 1,904,000	
Totals		\$ 3,403,361	\$ 2,377,600	\$ 5,780,961
Security				
Projected Expense:		910,000		
	Number	Actual Expenditures	Pending Expenditures	
Infrastructure	N/A	109,952		0
External locks	54	143,144		0
Internal locks*	314	629,871		0
Cameras	131	186,950		0
Total		\$ 1,069,917		0
* \$150,000 of this total from Sinking Fund				
Transportation				
Projected Expense:		679,430		
	Number	Actual Expenditures	Pending Expenditures	
Busses	7	\$ 686,616		0
Bond Issuance/Service Fees				
Projected Expense:		150,010		
	Number	Actual Expenditures	Pending Expenditures	
	N/A	\$ 132,339		0
Total all categories				\$ 7,669,840
				Sinking Fund \$ (150,000)
				Bond Proceeds \$ 7,519,840

Thank You 2014-2015 Partners in Education!

The Okemos Education Foundation relies on financial donations in order to fulfill its mission. *Thank you* to our *2014-2015 Partners in Education* for supporting Okemos students! Donors as of May 1 are listed.

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A.J. Boggs
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***It is important to the OEF to accurately reflect the generosity of our donors.
 Please contact us at chair@oefsite.org if you find errors in this information.*



Business Sponsorship Opportunities Available

Do you own or work for a business that needs help advertising to the Okemos community? The OEF serves all 4,100 Okemos students... that's 2,600 families in our area. Contact the OEF (chair@oefsite.org) to hear about ways we can help promote your business while you help the OEF support Okemos students.

*Our donor list is always available on our website at www.oefsite.org.
 Make a donation today and we'll add your name to our list.*

facebook

Do you like hearing about the good things the OEF is able to bring to our Okemos students? Then follow us on Facebook ("Okemos Education Foundation"). If you see a post you especially like, please "Share" it to help spread the word about the OEF and the great opportunities that our donors make possible.

OEF Grants Supporting Okemos Students: \$26,600 as of 4/30/15

OEF Grants

- Joyful Reading – advanced reading library for K-1st grades (Hiawatha and OPM)
- Leveled readers to accommodate various reading levels (OPM)
- Cross-cultural art project supplies (BW)
- Seeds of Science non-fiction Books for 3rd and 4th grades (OPM)
- Lego Storystarter software for creation of imaginary writing (BW)
- Literacy Stations (Hiawatha)
- Special Educ. Social Skills materials (Kinawa)
- Flexible learning space materials to create areas of collaborative learning (OHS)
- ACT prep workshops (one in each of the 4 subject areas; open to all OHS students)
- OEF Commitment to Excellence grants to 2014 award recipients for use in their classrooms (\$1,000 each to five recipients)
- Elementary Author Visit (in partnership with Horizon Bank) to each of the 4 elementary schools

Micro-Grants

- Origo Box of Math Facts - visual aid to help with multiplication and division facts (BW and OPM)
- Raz Kids on-line reading program for first grade classrooms (Hiawatha)
- Transportation to I-5 Big Science Lesson (BW)
- Speech Apraxia materials (OPM)



The OEF supported science fairs at several of our elementary schools this year through the **Connie Osborne Deits Science Enrichment Fund**. The OHS Robotics Club received its own Deits Grant to purchase materials for the creation of their annual robot. The OEF is grateful to the Deits Family for making an additional donation this year. Their generosity continues to provide science enrichment experiences for Okemos students.

***Your donation will help us
continue to support Okemos
students.***

Our students need you.

Complete and mail the donation form on the back cover or make an on-line contribution at oefsite.org.

Thank you!

Micro-Grants, continued

- Learning A-Z Language Arts software subscription for 3 classrooms (BW)
- Transportation for the Chieftain Champs after-school club (Hiawatha, BW, Cornell, Kinawa)

Connie Osborne Deits Science Enrichment Grants

- MSU 'Seeds of Science' field trips for every 4th grade class in the district
- Kinawa Science Night 2015
- Bennett Woods Family Science Night 2015
- Montessori at Central Science Fair 2015
- Michigan-Native fishes display at Kinawa
- Science Olympiad materials (OHS)

**Plus: 24 OEF-Sponsored
Clubs: \$48,800**



OPM student enjoying one of the non-fiction titles purchased with an OEF Grant this year.

The OEF Thanks Marna Wilson for Her Long Board Service

Marna Wilson, OEF Vice Chair, will be ending her 6-year tenure as an OEF Trustee. We have benefited from Marna's vast experience in the Okemos community and from her strong ideas and quiet wisdom. Thank you, Marna, for all you've done for the OEF and for Okemos Public Schools!

We were also sorry to lose Shannon Nedds, Tonya Rodriguez, and Lisa Webb Sharpe from the board earlier this year. We wish them well and appreciate the guidance they gave the foundation.

OEF Board Members Needed!

With four board departures, the OEF needs new leadership! The OEF is governed by an all-volunteer board of trustees. Each Trustee is asked to serve at least one (2-year) term. Are you passionate about Okemos Public Schools? Do you have time and experience to share with the OEF in support of its mission of "recognizing excellence and promoting innovation"?



Superintendent Cathy Ash with Marna Wilson at the 2014 OEF Awards Banquet.

If so, we need you! Browse the board information (under the "About" tab) at www.oefsite.org. You'll find a list of board member expectations as well as a short application form. We look forward to introducing several dynamic, new board members in our next newsletter.

Visiting Author Kelly DiPucchio



We are grateful to have had Michigan author, Kelly DiPucchio, visit our elementary schools for "March is Reading Month." She did 3 presentations in each building over 4 days, reading a few of her titles, as well as sharing how she got the ideas for her books, about the process of writing a picture book, and the importance of editing and rewriting. This photo shows Kelly holding the 200+ rejection letters that she has received over her career. "Do you think I ever wanted to give up? Yes, I did. But I kept at it because I love writing stories and if I had given up, I wouldn't have had all these books published." Ms. DiPucchio has authored more than a dozen popular titles. The OEF partners with Horizon Bank each spring to bring an author to our elementary students.

Okemos Education Foundation

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The OEF thanks Allegra of Lansing (Brad and Shirley Naghtin, owners) for their generosity in helping defray the printing costs of this newsletter.



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