



OEF News

Spring 2010

A publication of the Okemos Education Foundation www.oefsite.org

Announcing the **OEF Strategic Fund**

We cannot afford to let Michigan's school funding crisis put our children's future at risk.

Each year, with your support, the OEF funds dozens of teacher-initiated projects, and we will continue to support classroom innovation with our mini-grants and teacher awards. (See the article on page 9 for an overview of the grants we made this school year.)

However, as we have watched Michigan's school funding crisis become progressively worse (see the article *Facts about the Budget on page 2*), we've concluded that we need to do something more to protect as many vital learning opportunities as possible.

We have created a Strategic Fund to supplement our normal grant-making activities. The Fund will allow us to take a more proactive approach to supporting our students by making larger grants that will benefit students across the entire district.

After discussing the most pressing needs and promising opportunities for promoting learning, we've decided to target two areas that have been especially hard hit as the budget has shrunk.

Core academic subjects

We believe every Okemos student needs to acquire the skills and insights in four academic areas - **reading, science, mathematics, and social studies**. A strong grounding in these subjects opens the doors to school and college success, fulfilling careers in a world where ideas are the basic building blocks of progress, and allows full participation in the civic life of our communities.

The Strategic Fund will provide the updated textbooks, software programs, high-interest reading materials, math



manipulatives, and other learning materials that engage our students in the hard fun of learning these subjects.

Restoring and protecting extracurricular activities

As important as core academics are, we believe that important and memorable learning also takes place outside of the classroom and after the final bell rings. School clubs, field trips and other extracurricular activities have always provided students with opportunities to pursue their interests, strengthen their talents, and to acquire important personal and interpersonal skills.

Unfortunately, funding for many of these invaluable activities was eliminated this year, and many more are at risk next year. Far from being "fluff" or nonessential extras, we believe these extracurricular activities play an indispensable role in the student's lives.

- They enable students to discover previously hidden aptitudes, talents and interests, and they provide a supportive context in which they can flourish.
- They can raise academic aspirations and permit students to explore possible career fields and discover the real-world relevance of the things they learn in the classroom.
- They provide students with more time to focus on – and delve more deeply into – academic content that interests them.
- They allow students to master new skills and experience new places, new ideas, and new activities.
- If a club includes a community service component, as many do, they improve the connection between our schools and community members while helping students to strengthen their habits of altruism.
- Students learn to take greater responsibility for their own learning and discover resources and opportunities for learning beyond their classrooms.
- For many students, participating in a club is the most positive school-related experience they have, and can lead to greater academic motivation, school attendance, and school performance.

Fortunately it won't take enormous sums of money to restore or preserve many of these invaluable extracurricular activities. With your support, we hope to be able to fund modest stipends (about \$1,000 each) to club advisors and cover the transportation costs related to field trips.

How to help

You can learn more about the **Strategic Fund by going to www.oefsite.org**.

You'll find a FAQ about the campaign, and

(Continued on page 2)

- Cont., Strategic Fund

(From page 1)

information about the public recognition you or your business will receive for different levels of giving. You can also **donate online** using any major credit card (or use our **donation form** on page 11). And, as is the case with all other gifts to the OEF, contributions to the Strategic Fund are tax-deductible. **OEF**



Show your support for the OEF and Strategic Fund by displaying a **window decal** (shown above).

Decals will be available soon, check www.oefsite.org for details.

Why Core Academics?

The Strategic Fund will supply critical funding to replenish and strengthen the materials and supplies needed to support all of the core academic subject areas.

Reading

Strong reading skills are the foundation on which all other academic skills are built. They allow our students to quickly harvest knowledge from textbooks, follow detailed lab procedures in their science classes, translate word problems into equations in their mathematics courses, analyze historical documents in their social studies classes, and more clearly express their own ideas in writing. They open the door to the world's best literature and enable our students to vicariously experience the lives of others and better understand the human condition.

Math

Mathematics provide the indispensable problem-solving tools our students will need throughout school, in college and when they pursue careers in commerce, the sciences, engineering, technology, medicine, and the arts. Arithmetic, algebra, geometry, trigonometry, and calculus provide a set of keys that can unlock many of the question marks they will encounter throughout their lives. Mathematics will enable them to make sense of conflicting claims (whether those claims are made by scientists, politicians or advertisers), allocate scarce resources, calculate risks, and distinguish between successes and failures.

Social Studies

Social studies help our students understand what has occurred in the past and how those events shape the present and the future. History, geography, economics and civics courses demonstrate why and how they must balance rights and responsibilities in an open and democratic society. They provide our students with a context for developing habits of thoughtful analysis, reflective thinking and critical reasoning.

Sciences

In their science courses, our students acquire techniques for discovering, creating, and sharing accurate information about the world they live in. Science helps them understand the challenges they'll encounter throughout their lives, debunk myths, and select from among the difficult choices they will face. If the choices they face are unacceptable, science will enable them to create new options.

Facts about the Budget

In 1994, voters changed the way Michigan schools are funded by approving Proposal A, replacing local property tax revenue with a per-pupil allowance that comes directly from the state. These allowances are funded in large part by state sales taxes, and the new system worked well when the economy was reasonably strong

But in the current tough economic times, the size of the per-student allowance has failed to keep pace with rising costs. Moreover, school enrollment has been trending lower over the past decade, further reducing the amount of money we receive from the state.

As a result, the district has been forced to **cut nearly \$8.5 million from its annual operating budgets over the past 8 school years.** The toll has included:

- Closing schools
- Reducing or eliminating reading consultants, science coordinators,

counselors, secretaries, computer and media center coordinators, assistant coaches, gifted and talented programs, and student supervisors.

- Postponing, reducing or cancelling purchases of textbooks, library books, audio-visual materials and classroom supplies.
- Reducing electives, eliminating many after-school clubs and extracurricular activities and increasing sports participation fees.

Fortunately, it now looks like the drastic cuts anticipated for next year's per-pupil student allowance may not occur.

However, a serious budget crisis remains for our schools. The cuts in funding that the State made retroactively during the 2009-10 school year (\$165 per student) have not been restored, Okemos school enrollment is expected to further decline (the administration is estimating a loss

of 100 students), and costs are still rising.

The retirement package recently passed by the State legislature will have little impact on relieving the immediate **financial crisis Okemos schools face, which is projected to require budget reductions between 2 and 3.2 million dollars for the 2010-11 school year.**

We believe it is essential that we restore important learning opportunities that were eliminated over the past several years and to make several "catch up" investments in our students' futures.

The OEF Strategic Fund provides a way for everyone to help soften the blow of the budget shortfalls. You can make an online donation using any major credit card at www.oefsite.org or use the mail-in form available on page 11!

Author Patricia Polacco visits all Okemos elementaries

The OEF and Summit Community Bank sponsored a visit to Okemos in February by renowned author Patricia Polacco. Ms. Polacco, author and illustrator of over 47 books, spent four days here visiting each elementary school to share life lessons and experiences as an author as well as the real life stories that inspired her books *Meteor!*, *The Keeping Quilt*, and *Thank You, Mr. Falker*.

Prior to the visit, teachers and librarians presented and discussed many of her books with students. Writing and art projects were done, and contests about her books were offered, all to help students gain more from her actual visit. Student (and teacher, we have to be honest) anticipation grew as the date of her visit neared!



(L-R): Adam Goss, Patricia Polacco, Chris Nugent, and Dean Bolton.

Then when Ms. Polacco was here in person, students of all grades sat enthralled listening to her tell stories in which she skillfully incorporated the important values of treating others fairly and being friends to all, as well as many others. Having been born in Lansing and spending the summers of her youth in Williamston, she shared many personal experiences from our local area, helping students to make even stronger



Patricia Polacco displays the famous quilt from her book "The Keeping Quilt" to an audience of Okemos elementary students.

connections with her and her stories. In addition, some students with learning difficulties, such as Ms. Polacco's dyslexia, felt an even stronger connection to the personal experiences she shared of growing up as a non-reader.

"Having a renowned Michigan author like Patricia Polacco share her experiences with our students was a wonderful learning opportunity," remarked Bennett Woods and Wardcliff Reading Specialist Sally Heisler. "It was a valuable experience for us all and not one we will soon forget."

This marks the second year that the OEF has partnered with Summit Community Bank to sponsor the author visit. "The Okemos Education Foundation's strength and vision

is a perfect example of what makes Okemos such an innovative and enticing place to live, work, and raise a family," said Summit Community Bank Market Manager Adam Goss. "As a community banker and lifelong resident of Okemos, I am proud of Summit Community Bank's commitment to the OEF and the families and businesses that make our community great." **OEF**



Students listened with rapt attention to master storyteller Patricia Polacco. Afterwards, they met the author and illustrator and had a chance to touch a piece of the famous meteorite from her children's book "Meteor!"

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Thank you!

*Thank you so very much for granting me the money to purchase a **petrographic microscope** for the Okemos 4th graders. They are very excited for it to arrive and it will truly benefit them academically. It will enrich their earth materials unit in so many ways. Again, thank you for your support and generosity.*

Kristina Cuellar

Thank you so much! We appreciate the OEF helping us with the funds to buy the materials that will make a positive difference in the lives of our students. We spend time and money on the things we value; and I passionately value helping to create life-long readers!

Melissa Allis

The lower elementary teachers are extremely grateful for this grant. We look forward to receiving the 6 traits writing kits.

Jennifer Schlicher

Thank you so much for your kindness – our student's writing skills will greatly improve!

Christine Batora

We are so thankful for your grant! Your support is a tremendous gift for our schools.

Holly Bowling**New OEF Trustees**

The OEF is pleased to announce the addition of three new Trustees: **Minesh Mody, Lori Koons, and Michelle Mitchell**. Lori will be serving as an OEF officer in the position of Assistant Treasurer.

Lori Koons and her husband Paul moved to the Okemos area in 1995 when they began raising their family. Their two children have been students at Wardcliff and Kinawa. Soon both will be at Okemos High School. Lori is a graduate of Central Michigan University with a BS in Accounting. She obtained her MS in Engineering in the Management of Technology from the University of Pennsylvania. She works for Hewlett Packard managing information technology projects. Lori has been active in Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, the Kinawa Walk/Run and is currently chairing the Finance Ministry at The Peoples Church.

Michelle Mitchell moved to Okemos in 2001 with her family. A native of Traverse City, Michelle received her Bachelor's degree in Communications from Hope College, and completed a Master's degree in Higher Education Administration from Michigan State University. She worked in various positions in higher education for 18 years, spending the last 9 years serving as an Associate Director for Career Services at MSU College of Law. Michelle is also a certified etiquette

consultant, and has provided educational workshops and training sessions for students, professionals, and organizations nationally. Michelle's husband, John, is an Anesthesiologist practicing with Physician Anesthesia Service, PC. They have two children in the Okemos school district.

Minesh Mody and his wife Hina moved to the Lansing area in 1985 and have lived in Okemos since 1992. They have two OHS graduates, Shivani and Aanand. Minesh is currently working as a Chief Financial Officer for the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. He has also been a licensed Realtor since 1993 and is affiliated with Tomie Raines Inc. He is actively involved in local community and professional groups, volunteering with Bharatiya Temple of Lansing, India Cultural Society (Greater Lansing), State Administrative Officers Association where he is serving as a President for 2010 -2011, Transportation Toastmasters and Tri-County Office of Aging (Meals on Wheels program). He also served on the infrastructure improvement bond campaign for Okemos Schools in 2003.

We are also sad to say goodbye to **Kathy Branch** and **Wayne Abbott** who have stepped down from the board since our last newsletter. We thank them for their service, and wish them well in their future pursuits! **OEF**

Shah ACT Excellence Award

Dr. Aajay Shah, Okemos cardiologist, and his family have pledged to donate \$1,000 to the Okemos Education Foundation for EVERY Okemos High School student who receives the top scores of 35 or 36 on the ACT exam.



Dr. Aajay Shah

Knowing the importance of good ACT scores for admission to good colleges, they are making this pledge as an incentive to help students in preparing and excelling on the ACT exam. The first **Shah ACT Excellence Awards** were

presented at this year's Senior Honors Convocation to the seven students from the Class of 2010 that achieved a 35 or 36.

The students will also receive recognition on a special plaque that will be installed in the OHS lobby. OEF Trustees will work with high school teachers and counselors to provide support for improving OHS student ACT scores starting next school year.

We thank the Shah Family for their commitment to the Okemos Education Foundation, Okemos Public Schools and, most importantly, Okemos students. **OEF**

Mark your calendar!

June 18: Nomination forms due for Commitment to Excellence awards, and deadline for Grant applications.

October 1: Next Grant application deadline. (Note: there are several application periods throughout the year.)

November 17: OEF Awards Banquet

Message from OEF Chair

As the OEF's 25th year of supporting Okemos Public Schools comes to an end, it is a chance to reflect on one of our most successful years ever. From an uplifting OEF Awards Banquet in November, to an inspirational visiting author in February, to the creation of the Strategic Fund in May, to best of all, the issuing of more grants than any other year - overall, more than \$42,000 in support so far - it has been an extraordinary year.

In spite of the tough economic environment,



Dean Bolton-OEF Chair

our Partners in Education - Okemos parents, community members, businesses and district staff - are the real heroes who have made all this possible with their financial support. I would

like to express my appreciation to all of them on behalf of so many - OEF trustees, Okemos Public School's faculty and staff, and most importantly, the students who are the real beneficiaries.

I'd like to give special recognition to several individuals and businesses that have demonstrated true leadership in their commitment and generous support to OEF and to Okemos Public Schools. Thanks to

the generosity of the Deits family, the Connie Osborn Deits Science Enrichment Fund has had a profound impact on science education across the district. Summit Community Bank has partnered with the OEF once again this year to co-sponsor the visiting author series for all Okemos elementary schools. This year, and for many years, Delta

In spite of the tough economic environment, our Partners in Education - Okemos parents, community members, businesses and district staff - are the real heroes who have made all this possible with their financial support.

Dental of Michigan has been the sponsor of the OEF Awards Banquet. New this year is the support of Dr. Aajay Shah in honor of student achievement on the ACT test. And, elsewhere in this newsletter you will find the list of individuals who support the OEF at an outstanding level.

At the core of the foundation's activities are our grant programs. So far this year, we have given away 29 grants for a total of \$26,000. And, we're not done yet! To accommodate the reconfigurations occurring in our district, we added a grant cycle with a mid-June deadline to allow teachers to submit

proposals to begin at the start of the new school year. As you read in this newsletter about some of the projects we've funded this year, you will realize the breadth of impact these grants can have, spanning all areas of curriculum and at all grade levels.

As we look ahead to next year, it is clear that the foundation will serve an important role in our schools and community like never before. Unfortunately, the state-wide school funding crisis is hurting every school district in Michigan and it has reached a crisis stage here in Okemos. While the OEF's traditional grant programs will continue, we have created a new Strategic Fund to provide the support and flexibility to proactively target high-impact high-leverage activities that may otherwise be cut or unavailable in the future - low-cost programs, purchases or activities that have a significant impact on learning but that, for a variety of reasons, are underfunded. You can find more information about this important effort in this newsletter and on our website, www.oefsite.org.

If you have never considered supporting the OEF, I hope that after reading this newsletter and exploring our website you will join us, either now through the Strategic Fund or in the fall during our annual Partners in Education campaign, in supporting the education of every Okemos student in every Okemos school. **OEF**

2009-10 Annual Financial Report

In this time of financial turmoil for our schools, the OEF believes it is more important than ever for our supporters and school community to have a clear understanding of the OEF's financial resources.

The OEF's primary source of income has been the annual **Partners in Education** Fundraising drive. This

fundraising campaign kicks off in the fall, and provides funding for our annual grants and awards (see list on page 9) as well as our long-term endowment. Donations are accepted all year long for this campaign.

This year, we have introduced a new fundraising initiative called the **Strategic Fund Campaign** to help offset Okemos schools' budget cuts. You can find out more

about this campaign on page 1.

As always, we hope that we can count on your support in the future as we have in the past. Every contribution (large or small, new or ongoing) does make a difference for our kids! All donations to the OEF, a 501(c)(3) organization, are tax-deductible. Thank you. **OEF**

As of 6/08/10, the Okemos Education Foundation had the following fund balances:

General Fund: \$67,781

Strategic Fund: \$31,628

Temporarily Restricted Funds - Outstanding Grant/Award Obligations: \$32,655

Permanently Restricted - Endowment Fund: \$184,743

- The OEF General and Temporarily Restricted Funds are used to fund OEF grants, awards and program costs.
- The Strategic Fund (initiated in Spring 2010) will be used to fund grants in two areas: Core Academics and Extracurriculars/Clubs.
- The OEF Endowment Fund is managed by *PensionTrend Investment Advisors, LLC* and will be used to fund future grants and awards.

Message from our Superintendent

Like most districts across the state, Okemos Public Schools faces major financial challenges. We, as a community, have continued to be proactive in long range planning, in how we approach challenges, and in providing exceptional parent involvement and support. As a result, Okemos Public Schools has maintained excellent academic and extracurricular programs in which our students excel. Despite financial hardship, we remain one district with one mission. We continue to pave the way for a solid future and care deeply for all of our students.

Parents and community members have asked what they can do in the current climate to assist us as a district. There are several ways those concerned can assist:

- All parents can remain active in their schools and activities. This benefits both the schools themselves as well your children. This also allows you to have an active presence there.
- If possible, continue to give financially to the organizations that support our students, and specifically your children. Every school has a parent group and organizations that support the arts and athletics as well. Support them!
- The OEF continues their strong support of our schools through grants to teachers for innovative ideas, fellowships that support teacher collaboration and learning, and through the new Strategic Fund which will help the district to respond directly to needs that occur because of the state educational budget crisis.
- Please consider being an active political voice and by calling key

legislators to adequately fund schools. Being conservative, planning wisely, closing schools, cutting for 10 years, and carefully utilizing fund balance is not enough! There truly is a funding problem that must be fixed by the legislature. You can make a difference.

Next fall, Okemos Public Schools will emerge with a different look: **three K-4 elementary schools** (Bennett Woods, Cornell, Hiawatha), **a grades 5-6 school** (Kinawa), **a grades 7-8 school** (Chippewa), **a public elementary/middle school Montessori program** (elementary at Central school, middle grades at Chippewa and Kinawa), and our **grades 9-12 Okemos High School**. I believe our commitment as a community to each child's success will remain strong.

THANK YOU for your ongoing support as we finalize transitions for this coming year. I have personally been privileged to observe and to participate in the efforts of parent groups and school personnel to design and implement transition activities, some of which have already taken place. Fall really will be here soon, and the Okemos school community will be prepared!

While the above has been a significant focus for 2009-2010, please be assured that much time and effort have also been concentrated on important educational goals. Student learning is our district's main focus and we continued our "Failure is Not an Option" efforts through Response to Intervention (RTI), emphasizing actual student universal screenings and intervention strategies. These efforts will continue again next year as we systemically build ways for all our students to achieve at high levels. School

board president Ron Styka noted recently that "this is one of the most important things keeping Okemos a top district in the state."



Dr. Cheryl Kreger, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

I am happy to mention again that our schools achieved Adequate Yearly Progress and received "A" ratings under the No Child Left Behind mandates and that our students scored well above the state benchmarks on the ACT and other standardized testing. Okemos High School was recently recognized among the nation's top high schools by U.S. News and World Report magazine, and there were a record number of OHS national merit award finalists.

I am confident that we will continue the tradition of excellence as we work together, establishing the foundation for the 2010-2011 school year. I hope you found time this spring to enjoy one of the many activities in our district including spring sports games and band, choir and orchestra performances.

Congratulations to our graduating seniors!



Dr. Cheryl Kreger, after serving 40 years in public education, recently announced her retirement as Okemos Superintendent of Schools, effective July 1, 2010. We thank her for her time in Okemos, and wish her the best in her future endeavors!

Thank you for your support!

We would like to thank the OEF for all of the support you continually offer our schools. It is greatly appreciated by both our staff and teachers.

Tara Fry
Principal, Cornell Elementary

Thank you so much for the approval of this grant request. I am very appreciative and excited about purchasing these slides. I think they will really add to our current curriculum and help to make the cellular biology portion of the year more appealing and real to students.

Denise Daberko

On behalf of our teaching staff, I would like to thank the OEF for your generous support of our reading program! We are excited to expand our leveled book collection and support our students becoming long skilled readers. . . . We also appreciated the generosity of the OEF in helping make the author visit by Patricia Polacco possible. She was excellent and very inspirational to our students. Thank you for all you do to help Okemos students and staff!!!

Jeri Mifflin
Principal, Bennett Woods

Many, many thanks for accepting our grants requests! We look forward to being able to support our students with writing – thanks to your kindness and generosity!

Erin Gould

The OEF is truly a blessing to the educators and students in this district. I am looking forward to starting this endeavor with my students and enhancing their mathematical foundations. Again, thank you!

Julie Bellinger

Okemos student volunteers- making a difference!

The importance of service begins early for Okemos students. At the elementary level, our youngest boys and girls know that they can make a difference- and they definitely *have* made a difference. This year, every single Okemos school raised money for earthquake relief in Haiti. Our schools have given back to the community in many other ways- from raising money and gathering goods for cancer research to sending support to our troops stationed overseas, Okemos students have contributed with gusto.



Dr. Cheryl Kreger described the amazing generosity of Okemos students in a report she did for *KidsWorld* magazine:

At Hiawatha, Mrs. Yarbrough's 4th grade class coordinated a Penny Drive and donated to the American Red Cross to distribute where the need was the greatest. Containers were placed in classrooms so children could deposit loose change. Every day, classroom containers were emptied into the main container in the office. On February 5th, the students presented a check for \$1,201.36 to the Red Cross at an all school assembly. These gifts were from the heart, with no incentives or prizes.

At Central Elementary, Don Poore's 5th graders took leadership and began raising funds shortly after the earthquake through February. The creative class organized fun activities that would highlight the effort and encourage students to remember their change. One day, students brought their favorite stuffed animals to school and they also brought a quarter for the Haiti jar. Each day, the jar was taken around to classrooms so students could actually deposit their own quarters. The Central staff and parents also contributed by having a bake sale which was most successful. Every item was sold!!! Teachers also put a dollar in the jar for the option of dressing casually on Fridays. Additionally, the PTO donated all the proceeds from a used book sale to the Haiti Relief Fund. The thousand dollar goal of Central students was realized.

At Bennett Woods, the students had a "Give it Up for Haiti" project in which students and staff selected a personal sacrifice to make and then donated the amount of savings

from that sacrifice to Haiti. Some students gave up renting a movie or video game, dinner out, an allowance, etc. for the cause. Over \$1,000 was raised and a bulletin board in the cafeteria highlighted various things that students gave up to raise it.

Cornell's efforts raised an incredible \$2,111 with a school-wide penny war! Every grade contributed with the 3rd graders raising the most. The winning grade was to be rewarded with an ice cream party, but they opted to forego it so they could increase the donation amount instead. The penny war proceeds were donated to a local non-profit group of doctors and medical professionals who travelled to Haiti in February. A local doctor, Dr. Susan Caldwell, was presented with the donation at a school-wide assembly at Cornell, and she returned to the school again after the trip to share photos and report on its success.

Edgewood Montessori collected \$2,364.62 for the Red Cross and Wardcliff collected coins along with their "March is Reading Month" efforts. Okemos continues to be proud that their students believe in service and a global perspective beginning with the youngest students.

At Bennett Woods, the ACTION (All Connecting To Improve Our Neighborhoods) Juniors dedicate time each month for projects such as decorating pillow cases for the homeless with the help of OHS students. This emphasis through the years, culminates at the high school in Senior Service Day and ACTION work. We are proud of our students and the work they do in the classroom and in the greater community.

Rachel Freeman, Okemos High School teacher and coordinator of ACTION, provided the following summary of the wonderful volunteer activities that Okemos ACTION students are doing within our community:

ACTION is a growing volunteer organization at Okemos High School. All students are welcome to participate in events, and this year over 470 OHS students committed at least one act of volunteerism.

Within ACTION, there is a wide range of focus groups, each working to better a specific part of our community. An overview of our points of pride:

- Fall and Spring Cleaning crew helped to clean ten houses of local senior citizens.
- Elementary Outreach Captains have organized several events including Family Fun Nights, Carnivals, childcare at all elementary schools during PTO meetings and during Parent Teacher Conferences, ice cream socials at several elementary schools, and many other activities.
- We continued ACTION Jr. at Bennett Woods to encourage Okemos elementary students to begin volunteering. Once each month, high school students guide Bennett Woods

students in a volunteer project.

- Central Mentoring had its most successful year. We had over 60 OHS students committed to mentoring 35 elementary students every Monday and Wednesday.
- Tutoring at Wardcliff was also a huge success. Every Thursday, 15 OHS students tutored elementary students.
- ACTION members have prepared eight dinners for the families at the Ronald McDonald House in Lansing.
- Refugee Service Captains tutored local refugees and held World AIDS Awareness Day.
- ICMCF (Ingham County Medical Care Facility) Captains organized twelve bingo/euchre nights for the residents and holiday gift wrapping sessions.
- Carriage Lanes Captains held five birthday parties, a Thanksgiving party, and a holiday party which included making candy cane reindeer and a visit from Santa.
- Special Education Captains have organized eleven events including visiting Funtime, going to see Fred Claus, and coaching Special Olympics Athletes.
- School Improvement Captains organized several ACTION ARMY days where they cleaned classrooms and helped custodians clean OHS.
- Captains collected over \$2,000 for the Maggie Miller Scholarship.
- Captains helped to raise over \$1,500 for Toys for Tots.
- Captains helped to raise over \$27,000 in just three years for ALS research!

Way to go Okemos students!

School Board Nominee Filing Deadline

Community members interested in running for **Okemos school board** in November must submit an Affidavit of Identity and Nominating Petition or Filing Fee to the Meridian Township clerk's office no later than **4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, August 10.**

Information and filing forms can be obtained at the township main office at Marsh Road and Central Park Drive.

2009-10 OEF Grants Summary

Thanks to the generous support from our donors, the **Okemos Education Foundation was able to invest nearly \$26,000 in our students' futures this year.**

Several times throughout the school year, we evaluate requests from teachers who are seeking to create new and innovative learning opportunities for their students. Here are a few of these learning opportunities that



A teaching easel adds flexibility to reading lessons.

you've made possible this year. (See page 9 for a list of all the grants for the 2009-10 school year that you have funded.)

Excellent writing teachers know that the best way to inspire children to write well is to give them compelling subjects to write about, and Wardcliff fourth graders have used **thirty-two portable stools** to immerse themselves in nature and record what they observe and experience. The stools are also used by the school's nature club



Portable stools make creative writing much more creative!

members as they study, record and sketch the changes that occur around them each season.

Researchers have long noted that most teens complain that they cannot find books that grab and hold their interest. Our upper middle school students tasked with keeping weekly reading logs now have an additional **seventy recent high-interest novels** available for check out from classroom libraries.

Upper elementary students will enjoy an additional **fifty high-interest fiction and non-fiction books** aligned with the topics covered in 5th grade science and social studies classes.

Elementary students learning math are benefiting from two new innovations funded by the OEF. **Touch Math products** enable teachers to use auditory, visual and tactical approaches to help learners master basic and complex arithmetic operations. **Math Games and Activity Stations** can be wheeled among class-

rooms to provide students with motivating alternatives to traditional paper-and-pencil instruction.

"Listen to Reading" Independent Work Stations, consisting of personal CD players, headphones and high interest children's audio books, help first graders improve their reading fluency and comprehension, expand their vocabulary, and express themselves. These reading aids are especially valuable for our students who speak a language other than English at home, and for those who lacked frequent "lap time" listening to a parent reading to them when they were younger.

Elementary students are benefiting from **6 Traits Writing toolkits** as they work to improve their writing skills. The 6 Traits framework breaks writing into individual, easy-to-understand elements - Ideas, Organization, Voice, Sentence Fluency, Word Choice and Conventions - helping students and teachers analyze and improve their

writing.

Using the **Petro Graphic Microscope** and slide sets, fourth graders studying geology at Wardcliff Elementary learn how to identify minerals by examining them up close rather than looking at hand samples and guessing based on their appearance.

Prior to acquiring a **variety of 3D models and human tissue slides**, high school biology and anatomy teachers often had to rely on diagrams and photographs in text books. Now students can study 3D models of the lung, ear, torso and skin, and examine bone, nerve, muscle, epithelial and blood tissue with a microscope.

The **Real Care Doll Simulator** provides high school students taking Child Development classes with a realistic preview of what it is like to care for an infant. After being programmed to simulating a newborn infant birth to three months old, the doll periodically cries to be cared for - burped, fed, rocked or diapered - as a real infant would. Sensors in the dolls monitor and record how well the student assigned the doll determines and responds to the infant's needs.

The **Connie Osborne Deits Science Enrichment Fund**, endowed by the Deits family in memory of Connie, supported



Staying focused is easy with "Listen to Reading" Independent Work Stations.

hands-on learning from our Edgewood Preschool up through the High School. Here are several of the learning opportunities made possible by the Deits Fund:

Preschoolers will enjoy eight **monthly Animal Visits for Preprimary Science Enrichment** next school year as staff from Potter Park Zoo,

(continued on page 9)

2009-2010 Grants and Awards (so far!)

OEF Grants

Portable Writing Stools

Wardcliff – 4th Grade
Beth Kott, \$700

Teaching Easel and Book Display Shelf Unit

Hiawatha – Basic Classroom K-5
Joni Steinhaus, \$420

Petro Graphic Microscope and Slides

Wardcliff – 4th Grade
Kristina Cuellar, \$1,000

Writing Toolkits

Edgewood – 4th, 5th Grade
Karen Casler, \$920

Social Skills Development Kit

Basic Classrooms – K-12
Julie Clarizio and Stacy Trumpie, \$984

Lab Practical Implementation

OHS biology
Danielle Tandoc, \$1,000

Leveled Book Collection

Bennett Woods – 2nd – 4th Grades
Melissa Allis and Sally Heisler, \$937

6 Traits Writing Kits

Edgewood – 1st – 3rd Grades
Christine Batara and Holly Bowling, \$1,000

6 Traits Writing Kits

Edgewood – 1st – 3rd Grades
Erin Gould and Jennifer Schlicher, \$1,000

Touch Math Kits

Cornell – Special Education, \$950

Math Games and Activity Stations

Wardcliff – 2nd Grade
Julie Bellinger, \$1,000

Paper/Utility Cutter

Okemos High School – Art,
Rachel Hollenback, \$440

Listen to Reading Work Stations

Wardcliff – 1st Grade
Lori Howe and Jenny Woodruff, \$1,000

Assistive Technology for ADHD Students

Okemos High School – Resource Classroom
Christine Skoutelas, \$278

Classroom Reading Materials

Chippewa – 8th Grade
Heidi Greenhoe, \$550

Fashion Design Sewing Machines

Okemos High School – Life Skills
Lindsay Jackson, \$1,025

Real Care Doll Simulator

Okemos High School – Life Skills
Lindsay Jackson, \$990

Badminton Kits

Chippewa – Physical Education
Jamie Ianni and Kathy Harbert, \$1,000

Listen to Reading Work Stations

Wardcliff – 1st Grade
Lori Howe and Jenny Woodruff, \$1,000

United States Timeline

Edgewood 4th -5th Grades
Marisa McCormick \$106

High Interest Books for Struggling Readers

Cornell/Edgewood/Wardcliff –
Intervention Specialist, Nicole Berridge, \$500

Connie Osborn Deits Science Enrichment Fund

Hands-On Science Activity Supplies,

All Kindergarten Classrooms
Lisa Hall, \$1,000

Seeds of Science Field Trip to MSU,

All 4th Grade Classrooms
Patricia Trelstad, \$2,277

Biotechnology Equipment

Okemos High School – AP Biology
Colleen Palmer, \$985

Circuit Design in the 21st Century

Okemos High School – Physics
Kelly Carrier, \$700

Microscopy – Biology, Chemistry, Forensics

Okemos High School – Biology
Denise Daberko, \$965

Structure and Function of Cells and Tissues

Okemos High School – Biology
Andrew Moore, \$1,406

Kinawa Greenhouse Irrigation System

Kinawa – Montessori
Matt Prinz and Josh Coty, \$1,000

Animal Visits for Preprimary Science Enrichment

Edgewood – Preschool
Janet Campbell and Barbara Stynes, \$911

Commitment to Excellence Educator Awards

Bob Bullock
Chippewa, \$1,000

Jennifer Holcomb

Cornell, \$1,000

Beth Josephson

Okemos High School, \$1,000

Christopher Smith

Okemos High School, \$1,000

Deborah Sprecher

Central and Edgewood, \$1,000

Marc Vickers

Okemos High School, \$1,000

Cont., Grants Summary

(from page 8)

Preuss Pets and MSU's Department of Entomology bring a variety mammals, birds, fish, reptiles and insects to the classroom. The grant also provided preschoolers with animal anatomy puzzles, wildlife field guides and animal family classification kits.

Fourth graders throughout the school district participated in the **Seeds of Science Field Trips** when they engaged with plants up close with the help of specialists and docents at Michigan State University's Clancy E. Lewis Landscape Arboretum, Horticulture Gardens and the Michigan 4-H Children's Garden.

Students at Kinawa will have a realistic

context in which to apply their physics, plant science and math skills **as they install, maintain and use the new Kinawa Greenhouse Irrigation System**, which draws water from a creek and pond on school property and conveys it uphill to the greenhouse (funded in part through a previous Deits Fund grant).

Advances in biotechnology will continue to shape the way we identify, prevent and cure disease and high school Advanced Placement Biology students are mastering some of the requisite skills by using a **Gel Electrophoresis Chamber Set and supporting materials** to separate and identify DNA fragments.

High school physics students are using the same tools that electrical engineers employ - **breadboard and jumper kits** - to design electronic devices. These kits enable students to create electrical circuits while experimenting with designs for burglar and water alarms, sirens, finger touch lamps, and metal detectors.

These are just a few of the examples of how OEF funds were put to use this year and, as this newsletter goes to print, **there is still one more grant cycle remaining for this year**. All of these grants will continue to provide our students with powerful learning experiences for many years to come. **OEF**

Thank You 2009-10 Partners in Education!

The Okemos Education Foundation thanks the many individuals, families, professionals, and businesses that so generously supported the foundation's 2009-10 *Partners in Education* program. This is a program intended to recognize donors on an annual basis for different levels of giving. Our Partners played a key role in supporting the most recent Commitment to Excellence banquet as well as ongoing classroom grants that supplement the excellent staff and programs at Okemos Public Schools. Strategic Fund supporters are also recognized as Partners, with recognition level based on the accrued total of all gifts given this year.

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OEF Strategic Fund Donation Form - Spring 2010

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*Thank you for supporting the
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OEF News

Okemos Education Foundation

4406 N. Okemos Road
Okemos, MI 48864



Strategic Fund Campaign

**It's up
all of
to us.**

See inside for details!

**Okemos Education Foundation
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*"Recognizing excellence and
promoting innovation in
Okemos Public Schools."*

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OHS Students "Fill-a-bus" for OEF!



Mr. Whitmyer's sixth hour AP government class held a "Fill-a-bus" fundraiser in late May for the OEF. The class, composed entirely of graduating seniors, collected returnable cans in an effort to help stave off budget cuts for future students. **They raised \$665 for the OEF Strategic Fund**, a new fundraising campaign designed to address budget shortfalls for next year. Awesome job! *See inside for more information about the Strategic Fund.*