



# OEF News

Spring 2009

A publication of the Okemos Education Foundation [www.oefsite.org](http://www.oefsite.org)

## Connie Osborn Deits Science Enrichment Fund

At the 2008 OEF Awards Banquet last November, we were pleased to announce the creation of the **Connie Osborn Deits Science Enrichment Fund**. This fund represents a powerful example of the spirit of giving, one that demonstrates the unselfish desire to support the education of all of our children.

Tom and Connie Deits worked on science outreach for many, many years both inside and outside the district. Their son Robin attended Edgewood Elementary, Kinawa Middle School and graduated from Okemos High School in 2007. While Robin was at Edgewood, Connie and Tom served on the committee that ran the science fairs and then they moved on to the Science Olympiad program at Kinawa and Okemos High School. For many of those years they were instrumental in their involvement with the district's parent group, Supporters of Okemos Science, and Science Fun Day, a wonderful science outreach event held for all ages each year in Okemos. Even with Robin now in his sophomore year at MIT, Connie and Tom continued to be in-

involved with Science Fun Day each year.

Sadly, Connie passed away in early 2008. Because Connie and Tom had talked about the science enrichment needs in the dis-

trict, wanting to find a way to help carry forward the work of increasing the understanding and appreciation of science by students in Okemos, they found a pathway with the OEF to express their interests and address the need for more support for science education throughout the district.

The Connie Osborn Deits Science Enrichment Fund will be dedicated for science enrichment purposes at all levels of the district. The Deits family has pledged to donate to the OEF \$50,000 over the next five years in order to endow this fund in memory of Connie's fierce devotion to science and science education, her interest in keeping science strong in Okemos, and her love of her family.

The OEF is truly grateful to the Deits Family for their desire to honor Connie's life in such a meaningful way. **OEF**



Connie, Tom, and Robin Deits

## Summit Community Bank and OEF sponsor March is Reading Month!

The Okemos Education Foundation and Summit Community Bank were pleased to be co-sponsors for the



(L-R) Dean Bolton, Adam Goss, Denise Rodgers

2009 Okemos Public School's Elementary Author Visit. For many years, Okemos elementary students have had the opportunity to meet and talk with authors and illustrators. **This year's visit featured Michigan poet Denise Rodgers.** Known as "The Poetry Lady," Denise Rodgers visited all six elementary schools and shared with students the delights of writing and reading poetry. The visits included large group sessions for all grades as well as workshops for upper elementary students.

"The OEF is grateful for Summit Community Bank's partnership in support of a program that benefits every elementary student in Okemos Public Schools," said

### Mark your calendar!

**June 19:** Nomination forms due for Commitment to Excellence awards.

**October 1:** Next Mini-grant proposal due date. (Note: there are 2 more application periods throughout the year.)

**November 19:** OEF Awards Banquet

(Reading Month, continued from page 1)

Dean Bolton, OEF's chair. "Each year the Author Visit is a highlight for the children and provides up-close, personal experiences in the joys of reading and writing."

Summit Community Bank also hosted *Poetry in Motion*, an exhibit of poetry written by students from each elementary school in Okemos. Students, parents, and community members were invited to an open house reception at Summit Community Bank's



branch office located at 2151 West Grand River in Okemos.

"As a locally owned and managed community bank, we take our community involvement seriously. We believe it's important to give back to the community that supports us. And Okemos Public Schools and the OEF are truly a solid part of this community," commented Summit Community Bank Market Manager Adam Goss. 



## Message from OEF Chair

In elementary kindergarten rooms, middle school language arts classrooms, high school science labs and many other rooms throughout the district, OEF funds are at work. The results can start to be measured by the excitement of elementary school children sharing their work from poetry workshops, the sense of accomplishment middle school English language learners have as they improve their comprehension skills and the wonder in high school students as they measure the wave lengths of light. In classrooms throughout the district, the results continue to be measured as students progress through Okemos Public Schools. Each year the impact of OEF grants is felt throughout the district and this year was no different.



Dean Bolton-OEF Chair

As the OEF ends its 24th year of recognizing excellence and promoting innovation in Okemos Public Schools, I am pleased to report that we have funded \$25,845 in grants and awards so far this

year and will approve another round of grants before the school year ends.

This year, despite the economic climate, support for the OEF has remained strong. This is a sign that our community places great emphasis on education. There are so

*Thank you for your trust  
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tomorrow's leaders.*


many important needs and causes in our community, state and world - please know that generous support and investment in the OEF is one that will trigger tremendous returns in the future. There is no greater trust that could be expressed than a trust in our children and future generations. In a world of increasing complexity and worry, we all seek those things that are constant and tangible. I can think of no greater more tangible constant than the importance of a child's education.

The next several years will be a time of profound change for Okemos. Two of our elementary schools will close and our middle schools will reconfigure. Teachers and staff will have to develop new collegial partnerships, our vitally important parent

organizations will welcome many new members, and our children will be busy establishing new friendships. All of these transitions will occur against the backdrop of ever-tighter school budgets.

Each of us must decide whether we'll react to these changes with resistance, resentment and discouragement, or whether we'll turn this crisis into an opportunity to make our schools even better and provide our students with the best possible learning experiences.

The OEF is committed to the second option, and during the coming months we'll be talking to teachers and principals to identify ways we can help them overcome the challenges with the help of the small but strategic grants and awards OEF makes. I'll report on what we learn and describe the initiatives and innovations we'll be asking you to support when I send each of you our Partners in Education fundraising letter in the fall.

Thank you for your trust in the OEF and for your recognition and support of tomorrow's leaders. We are honored by your generosity and I look forward to continuing to share and celebrate with you the results of your support. 

## Message from our Superintendent

As we come to the end of the 2008-09 school year, the Okemos Public Schools continue to be a successful school district through the strong support of the school community and staff. We continue to:

- achieve Adequate Yearly Progress and receive "A" ratings;
- offer an exceptional educational experience that includes opportunities in arts, athletics, clubs drama, and music;
- preserve our facilities and improve our instructional resources through the community-approved Technology and Transportation Bond funding and the Building and Site Sinking Fund; and,
- maintain an adequate fund balance to protect the financial stability of the district.

The "together" in the district's mission statement signifies the important partnership between school and community. The community stepped forward this year through a long-range planning process to maintain our excellence and make difficult financial decisions that will benefit all students and create a district for the future. [Please visit [www.okemoschools.net](http://www.okemoschools.net) for updated information about the long-range planning process.]

On May 11, the Board of Education voted to keep 3 traditional elementary schools open as K-4 buildings and configure a 5-6 building and a 7-8 building in 2010-2011. As a result, Central Elementary and Wardcliff Elementary will close at that time. It is the Board of Education's wishes that what is good at all schools is honored and combined for the future of our students. I hope that this very brave and bold vote on the part of the board serves as a unifying factor for our district and paves the way for a solid future. Once again thank you to all for your efforts during the entire process.

Please know that the Central and Wardcliff staff, parents, students, and community are in our thoughts. Be assured that as I have spoken with parent groups, staff and community members, that all are concerned with the transition process and have expressed the desire to be included and provide assistance.

We are one district with one mission and care deeply for all who are part of the Okemos Schools. We will spend next year supporting transition efforts to make this decision successful.

I am pleased to note that even in these difficult economic times, the Okemos staff has completed goals set forth for this year as well as focused on becoming professional learning communities, committed to the learning of each student. We continue to

examine the challenge of how to find the "time" necessary for collaborative teams whose members work interdependently to achieve common goals linked to the purpose of learning for all.

I am confident that the value we all place on Okemos Public Schools' long-standing tradition of excellence for all children will carry us through the transitions that are ahead of us and result in continued opportunities for Okemos students to excel. The 2009-10 school year will be filled with positive energy as we plan programs and transitions for the years to come. Your continued support as a parent or stakeholder is a vital part of student success.



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

I wish everyone an enjoyable summer as the 2008-09 school year draws to a close, and I look forward to new accomplishments in the 2009-2010 school year. **OEF**

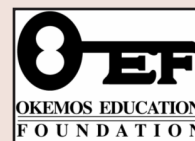
## OEF 2008-09 Annual Financial Report

The Okemos Education Foundation hopes you will help us play a critical role in helping our kids as our school district transitions to a new financial reality. As Okemos Public Schools' funding becomes more constricted, we believe it is important for our supporters to have a clear under-

standing of what OEF financial resources are available and how they are used. Our primary source of income is the annual Partners in Education Fall Fundraising drive. So far this year, we have raised over \$55,000. These funds help fund our annual grants and awards (see details on

page 6) as well as our long-term endowment. 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! Thank you for your support.

As of 5/20/09, the OEF had the following fund balances:



**General Fund: \$44,551**

**Temporarily Restricted Funds – Outstanding Grant/Award Obligations: \$38,281**

**Permanently Restricted – Endowment Fund: \$161,116**

**Our general and temporarily restricted funds are used to fund OEF grants, awards and program costs.**

**Our endowment fund is managed by Pension Trend Investment Advisors and will be used to fund future grants and awards.**



## Your support helps our kids face future challenges!

This school year OEF donors have supported innovative teaching and learning approaches that are as diverse as our students' needs and interests.

### To learn science, become a scientist!

If you've been listening to the debates about American education, you've probably heard that our children lag behind students in many developed nations when it comes to science and math. Your donations are closing this gap by helping students move beyond textbook explanations and begin practicing science.



High school chemistry and biology students are now using two **spectrophotometers** funded by OEF grants to measure light intensity, allowing them to perform many additional lab experiments, including a number that are recommended for students taking Advanced Placement science courses and examinations.

**Two-dimensional diagrams** are a second-best way to understand molecules, so another OEF grant is allowing science teachers and students to construct three-dimensional models of protein, carbohydrate and fat molecules and strands of DNA.

Using **Calculator Based Rangers (CBR2's)** funded by another OEF grant, 8th graders gather and analyze real world data, solve equations, create graphs and tables, and then share their results with classmates and teachers on classroom Smartboards.

Too often, students wonder how or if they'll ever use the math they're mastering in the classroom. Thanks to the OEF-supported **Elementary Engineering Program**, a number of 3rd graders now have an answer to that question. Every two or three weeks, they begin a new engineering project using materials purchased with the grant that reinforces data collection, geometry and computation skills. The proj-

ects also strengthen their collaboration and problem solving skills, which will be invaluable when they begin tackling real world problems 12 or 13 years from now.

Thanks to the **Connie Osborn Deits Science Enrichment Fund** we were able to fund two more projects that transform science lessons in the kind of fun learning that stretches minds.

- The **Hands On Family Science Night program** brings elementary students, their younger siblings and parents together to conduct experiments, review student science projects, and explore scientific concepts, assisted by high school student volunteers and an OHS science teacher.
- Middle school students at Kinawa are now learning first hand about plant structure and reproduction and the chemistry of plant nutrition in a **greenhouse** funded by the Deits fund. The greenhouse will provide healthy plants that will replace invasive species with native plants on the Kinawa grounds.



### More than just science...

Speaking a foreign language is going to be a key skill in a shrinking world, and the OEF-funded purchase of **Rosetta Stone software** allows high school students to improve their command of French during lunch hour, Flex periods, and before or after school.

In a world where knowledge will increasingly be created with collaborators around the globe using the Internet, the ability to produce, record and share information electronically is becoming ever more important. An OEF grant is allowing middle school language arts and social studies students to use **Digital Storytelling Technology** to hone those skills.

Of course, the most essential skill our children need to master is still read-

ing, and we're funding a series of projects aimed at helping every Okemos student become a fluent reader.

Several grants have purchased leveled readers allowing teachers to provide **high-interest books** to elementary students with varying levels of reading proficiency and **English Language Learner materials** for our middle school students from Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe who need to catch up with their classmates. Other reading-related grants have equipped teachers with technological



tools to help struggling readers, including **Alpha Smart word processors**, **S.P.I.R.E** (a multisensory language arts program), **phonics tiles**, and **auditory accommodation systems** that provide special needs students with a more level playing field while taking tests.

A **Lee Gerard Professional Development Fellowship** given to high school resource teachers will allow them to attend a conference this summer where they will learn more about how to improve parent communication skills and give parents effective verbal strategies for relating to their children. In the fall and beyond, these teachers will present their findings to parents and staff.

One of the best things about these and other grants we've made this year is that they will continue to provide our students with powerful learning experiences for years to come. **OEF**

OEF newsletter printing costs sponsored in part by:

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## OEF Commitment to Excellence Banquet Inspirational!

The 2008 OEF Commitment to Excellence Banquet was held on Thursday Nov. 20, 2008 at the Kellogg Center, MSU.

OEF Commitment to Excellence, Special Recognition, Alumni, and Dan C. Wertz Founders' Award recipients and nominees (see [oefsite.org](http://oefsite.org) for details) were honored for their contributions to the Okemos Public School community by over 270 people in attendance.

This inspirational event showcased the dedication and heart-felt effort of the educators and staff who form the foundation of excellence in Okemos Public Schools.

The OEF wishes to thank **DELTA DENTAL of Michigan** for sponsoring this event.

A special thanks to **Mark Bashore** for serving as the Master of Ceremonies, **Jim and Barbara Schmidt from Hyacinth House** for providing lovely floral designs, the Okemos High School's "**The Presto String Quartet**" for performing lovely music during the social hour, **Lifetouch National School Studios** for photographing the evening, **Matt Ottinger and the gifted crew from the Okemos Channel** for filming the award ceremony, and the



### OEF Special Recognition and Commitment to Excellence Award Recipients

*Back row (L-R) Kenneth Green, Eric Staib, Don Mowry, Bob Cooley, OEF Banquet Chair Cindy LeVine, OEF Chair Dean Bolton*

*Front row (L-R) OEF Awards Chair Paula Bjornstad, Frank DeWald, Janice Buhs, Rosemary Buscetta, Mary Ann Latta, Brian Harrod.*


*Not pictured: Alumni Award recipient Brig Sorber, Dan C. Wertz Founders Award recipients Dr. Charles and Maria Bill.*

(Photo courtesy Lifetouch National School Studios)

**Someko singers** for their "surprise" performance in honor of Frank DeWald!

A 50/50 Raffle drawing was also held to help fund the evenings fes-

tivities, with the winning ticket going to Sally Corbin for a prize of \$748.

The awards ceremony was filmed and can be seen on the Okemos Channel at various times- don't miss it! 

## OEF Spring 2009 Donation Form

I / We wish to support the OEF mission by making a tax-deductible gift in the amount of: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle how you would like your donation applied: OEF General Fund -or- OEF Endowment Fund

Contact Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name as to appear for public recognition (for Partners in Education and/or Founders recognition):  
\_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Web Address \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to:  
**Okemos Education Foundation**

Donations should be mailed to:  
**Okemos Education Foundation**  
**4406 N. Okemos Rd.**  
**Okemos, MI 48864**

**Please note:** Donations received after June 30, 2009 will be included in our **2009-10 Partners in Education recognition program.**

*Thank you for supporting the Okemos Education Foundation!*

## 2008-09 OEF Grants and Awards Summary

Each year, the OEF distributes thousands of dollars by way of grants and awards to the Okemos school community. This year alone, over \$25,000 was awarded to benefit Okemos Public School students, and we will be awarding one more round of mini-grants before the year ends!

Mini-grants are awarded three times

### Mini-Grants

Alpha-Smarts Mini-Laptops	Wardcliff – 5th Grade: Sheryl Hudler & Emily Santure	\$1,000
Phonic Tiles and Teacher Support Materials	Bennett Woods – 2nd & 3rd Grades: Melissa Allis, Kathy Hoffman, MaryAnn Latta, Ivy Schmidt, Linda Yaske	\$1,000
Elementary Engineering Program Robotic Equipment and Materials	Wardcliff - 3rd Grade: Robert Stephenson	\$1,000
Leveled Readers	Wardcliff – Reading Consultant: Melissa LaMarre	\$1,000
Mat Cutting System	Chippewa – Art: Janet Boniface	\$814
English Language Learners and Struggling Reader Supplies	Kinawa – Language Arts – 8th Grade: Kelly Cesar	\$263
Digital Storytelling Technology Equipment	Kinawa – Language Arts – 6th and 8th Grade: Suzanne Sullivan	\$780
Molecular and DNA Model Sets	Okemos High School – Biology: Kelly Carrier, Danielle Tondoc, Denise Daberko, Colleen Palmer	\$912
Spectrophotometer	Okemos High School – Chemistry: Karen Canestraight	\$819
Spectrophotometer	Okemos High School – Biology: Colleen Palmer	\$819
Rosetta Stone Software	Okemos High School – French: Melissa Samluk	\$548
Auditory Accommodation Systems	Okemos High School – Special Education: Christine Skoutelas	\$780
S.P.I.R.E. Reading and Language Arts Program for Struggling Readers	Wardcliff – Special Education: Jen Harnick	\$1,000
Leveled Readers for K and 1st Grades	Bennett Woods – Reading Consultant: Sally Heisler	\$1,000
English Language Learner Resources	Chippewa – E.L.L. Program: Carmen VanAlstine	\$370
CBR2 Calculators	Kinawa – Math – 8th Grade: Michelle Filipiak & Tracy Fleming	\$1,000
Document Camera	Okemos High School – French: Melissa Samluk	\$750

a year, in the fall, winter, and spring based on submitted applications. The **Lee Gerard Professional Development Fellowship** is an award designed to help foster a professional development community. The **Connie Osborn Deits Science Enrichment Fund** is a new fund (see details page 1) dedicated to the enrichment of science education.

The **Commitment to Excellence Awards** are given once a year to the six recipients of the educator award as honored at the OEF Awards banquet. The awardees may use their award as they desire to benefit their classroom students and school. Nominations are due June 19, 2009.

More information and applications for all these grants and awards are available at [www.oefsite.org](http://www.oefsite.org). 

### Lee Gerard Professional Development Fellowship

The Parent Talk System, Training of Teachers. The Language of Response-Able Parenting	Okemos High School – Resource: Dorean Brazier & Renee Maniaci	\$890
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### Connie Osborn Deits Science Enrichment Fund

Kinawa Greenhouse	Kinawa – Montessori: Matt Prinz & Josh Coty	\$1,400
Hands On Family Science Night/Student Science Fair	Bennett Woods: Jeri Mifflin & Colleen Palmer	\$600

### Commitment to Excellence Educator Awards

Six \$1,000 Awards given yearly	Bob Cooley, Frank DeWald, Brian Harrod, team of Mary Ann Latta & Rosemary Buscetta, Don Mowry, Eric Staib	\$6,000
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## Thank You 2008-09 Partners in Education!

The Okemos Education Foundation thanks the many individuals, families, professionals, and businesses that so generously supported the foundation's 2008-09 *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. Thank you!

### **Emerald Partners (\$5,000 and up)**

The Deits Family  
Delta Dental of Michigan  
Clark and Kathleen Manning  
Richard and Kathy Schalter

### **Platinum Partners (\$2,500 - \$4,999)**

Spartan Chassis  
Summit Community Bank

### **Gold Partners (\$1,000 - \$2,499)**

Dr. and Mrs. Charles H. Bill  
Warren Culver  
Peter and Beth Janick  
Cheryl and John Kreger  
Mary L. Rhodes

### **Silver Partners (\$500 - \$999)**

Kim and Mark Burzych  
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John and Kristen Hood  
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Patricia Trelstad  
Peter and Sherry Trezise  
Robert and Tiffany Tucheck  
Steven and Marna Wilson

### **Bronze Partners (\$250 - \$499)**

Wayne Abbott and Patricia Sorenson  
David Annis and Andrea Bozoki  
Paula M. Audas  
Deborah and Michael Baughman  
Allen Beegle and Suzi Yunker  
Dean Bolton and Helen Taylor  
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John and Carol Voss  
Kathy Warner and Tony Lopez  
Drs. West and Burkhardt, DDS

### **Friends (\$50 - \$249)**

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Deena Agree and Fred Gifford  
Judy Barton and Scott MacGuidwin  
Wolfgang and Diane Bauer  
William and Sheri Beecroft  
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Roger and Paula Bjornstad  
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Rosemary Buscetta  
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Todd Hickox and Carmen Ventocilla  
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Nancy Plum  
Anthony Recca  
Ritta Rosenberg  
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Krista Saldivia  
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Neal and Kara Schmitt  
Mary Schnepf  
Mrs. Irene K. Schutt  
Joni Steinhaus  
In honor of James Taggart  
Jeff and Kathy Tavormina  
Jim and Marlaine Teahan  
In honor of Kevin Vermeesch  
Fredrick W. Vogt  
Pankaj Vij  
Cheryl and Joe Wald  
Annette and Richard Weiser  
Pamela Williams  
Cynthia Wolff  
In honor of Abby Wood  
John Zappala

# OEF News

**Okemos Education Foundation**  
4406 N. Okemos Road  
Okemos, MI 48864

**OEF mission:** *“Recognizing excellence and promoting innovation in Okemos Public Schools.”*

## OEF

**Okemos Education Foundation**

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\*\*Board of Education Representative  
\*\*\* Superintendent of Schools

## OEF Trustee changes announced

The OEF is pleased to announce the addition of two new Trustees this year: **Jennifer Everhart** and **Marna Wilson**. Jennifer has accepted the position of OEF Treasurer, and we feel very fortunate to have her on our team. Marna is a new OEF Trustee, and we look forward to her expertise for years to come.

**Jennifer Everhart** is the Executive Vice President of Community and Business Services and Chief Underwriter for Great Lakes Capital Fund (GLCF). GLCF is a community development financial organization which has channeled equity investments totaling more than \$1 billion to support the development of 23,000 affordably priced homes for low-income residents living in the Great Lakes region. Jennifer and her husband, Joseph, are the parents of two Okemos students, and have lived in Okemos for eight years. Jennifer served as the Treasurer of the Edgewood Public Montessori PTO for two years, and volunteers her time leading a youth leadership mentoring program for Lansing middle school students.

**Marna Wilson**, with her husband Steven, is a twenty-three year resident of Okemos. Marna is Business Process Manager for the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. She is a long-time community volunteer and has served on several local Boards, including OCEAN, Nokomis Learning Center, and Friends of the Okemos Library. She is a former Meridian Township Trustee and Planning Commissioner. She received her undergraduate degree from University of New Mexico and master's degrees from Wayne State University and Aquinas College. Their son attended twelve years of Okemos Schools and is now a college graduate.

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We are also sad to say goodbye to OEF Treasurer **Diane Bauer**, who ended her service to the OEF in December. Diane served as the OEF Treasurer for many years, and we are grateful for her attention to detail and professionalism in all matters. We wish her the best and thank her for her years of service to our Okemos school community!