



Redding Education Foundation

...fostering the fulfillment of learning at every age

November 2004

THE REDDING EDUCATION FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

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Dear Fellow Redding Residents:

Two short years ago, a few friends and neighbors gathered together to bring the Redding Education Foundation (REF) to life. Congratulations go to so many in our community, Redding's Education Foundation to date has invested over \$70,000 to fund grants to teachers and cultural groups, provide technology for classrooms, help establish the Wire Mill Arts Foundation, and sponsor community forums.

Redding isn't alone in mobilizing the funds and talents of its residents to enhance learning opportunities. Education Foundations have been popping up all across the country to support public education with private resources. In Connecticut, over 55 Foundations have been formed since 1980. Common to all Education Foundations is a commitment to advance educational excellence in ways that extend beyond what taxpayer dollars can accomplish. While some Foundations focus solely on the public school community, REF has chosen to enhance learning opportunities for the entire community. To highlight a few specific programs:

* We offer to local educators *the Grants for the Enhancement of Educational Practice* (GEEP) program. Eight grants totaling over \$8,500 were given to teachers in all three schools to help them bring innovative practices to their classrooms. With your support, we hope to offer up to \$20,000 in grants this year. Look for a summary of the '04 Grants program and the offering for '05 on pages 2 and 3.

*Thanks to your support, we were able to provide funding for two mobile computer labs for the John Read Middle School. REF accepted the challenge from the Board of Education to take on this campaign as it met our criteria *for innovation* that would result in *systemic cost savings over the long term*. And because it was an item consistently dropped from the school budgets, it was *deemed beyond the scope of taxpayers' ability*.

Under the talented and capable leadership of Patsy King, a parent, REF Board member and advocate for educational excellence, we were able to leverage the \$28,000 contributed into over \$60,000 worth of computer equipment. Patsy and REF treasurer Joe Dolan were resourceful in helping donors tap into an IBM charitable giving program and sought out significant discounts on purchases. The result: REF delivered more than what was requested, on time, and in way that accessed the best technology for the least amount of money. (Look for more on the Mobile Lab Campaign on page 2.)

The real credit goes to all of you who have supported the Redding Education Foundation. At its best – and with your help – REF works by identifying educational needs in our community, then mobilizing the time, talent and treasury of our residents to meet those needs. For instance, this year REF is initiating a new twist on adult education by starting a series of lectures and workshops exploring learning how to learn. Check out the “Brain Buzz” insert for details. We outline our roster of exciting programs planned for 2005 inside – but do let us hear from you about how you feel REF can enhance education excellence in our town. A self-addressed mailing envelope is enclosed, with your contributions, financial and otherwise, gratefully accepted.

Sincerely,
Kate Ebbott, REF President
938-8383

THE REDDING EDUCATION FOUNDATION MISSION STATEMENT

The Redding Education Foundation is dedicated to mobilizing and enhancing opportunities to promote educational excellence so that the Redding community may better experience the fulfillment of learning at every age.

Established as a 501 C(3) in 2002, REF is nonpolitical by law and philosophically opposed to funding projects that are the responsibility of the Board of Education budgets. We are an all-volunteer board and 100% of our board members make a financial commitment to fund operations and programs.

MOBILE COMPUTER LABS A SUCCESS AT JRMS

Thanks to the generosity of nearly 95 Redding families and organizations (please see back page for all REF donors), two mobile computer labs are now in full use at JRMS. The story behind how REF mobilized both private and corporate monies to fund these labs is a model for how we hope to work in the future. Last March, the Redding Board of Education submitted a request asking that REF raise money to purchase one rolling cart equipped with 24 laptops with wireless access to the Internet, along with a wireless LCD projector and a printer – together, a huge step toward bringing technology into the classroom, as opposed to having to pull students into the (chronically overscheduled) computer rooms.

REF was gratified by the enthusiastic support and resourcefulness on the part of Redding residents and JRMS – so much so that the campaign delivered *two* mobile labs equipped with 35 laptops, the majority of which are IBM ThinkPads, machines that far exceed the specifications originally requested.

In all, the two JRMS Computer Labs are equipped with:

21 IBM R50 ThinkPad computers, purchased at 20% of their retail value via an IBM Corporate Matching Program

9 IBM ThinkPads, also purchased at a significant discount

2 new LexMark laser printers, donated by a Redding family

2 Gateway carts and one wireless LCD projector, which were shopped heavily to ensure low prices

5 compatible laptops purchased with monies allocated by the Board of Education to replace outdate machines.

That REF was able to fulfill this request on time, with equipment that exceeded expectations, is a credit to Redding residents — illustrating that there is a way to promote excellence in our schools, even with tight Board of Education budgets!

2004 GRANTS AWARDED TO TEACHERS IN ALL THREE REDDING SCHOOLS

The Grants for the Enhancement of Educational Practice (GEEP) program was conceived to offer teachers and administrators the opportunity to explore and implement innovative and creative practices through the application of technology, hands-on experiences, pursuit of professional development, and exposure to cultural diversity. Your support of this program is vital to its continued success! Thanks to the initial support of friends and neighbors, REF funded over \$8,500 to the following in eight grants:

Film Study to Explore Conflict Resolution, *Joanie Cone, Redding Elementary School*

Teaching students in the upper elementary grades to recognize and approach conflicts through short films and discussion.

An Inter-district Exploration of Children's Literature, *Jonathan S. Budd, Joel Barlow High School*

Students of a Children's Literature course engaged in experiential reading and writing activities with urban elementary school students.

Roots and Shoots, *Nancy Webber, Laura Beattie and Mary Autouri, John Read Middle School*

Established a new club which is based on the Jane Goodall Institute's environmental and humanitarian program for youth.

Child-Centered Water Garden, *Carrie Wessman, Redding Elementary School*

Introduces children, pre-school to Grade 4, to pond habitats and real-world biology.

(continued on page 3)

(continued from page 2)

French Interactive Conversation Software, Vance Tiede, John Read Middle School

Interactive conversation software permits students to practice speaking and listening to French.

Moving Beyond the Textbook, Jennifer Desmarais, Joel Barlow High School

Encourages students to move away from traditional textbooks and use primary documents and other secondary sources.

Redesigning American High Schools, Jennifer Desmarais, Thomas L. Kilbourn, Scott Reimold, Joel Barlow High School

Funded JBHS faculty attendance at "Redesigning American High Schools," a week-long professional development institute at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Project D.R.E.A.M. - Danbury and Redding Educational Adventures in Multiculturalism, Nancy Bowen, John Read Middle School

An experiential, multicultural program with Danbury students to promote a deeper understanding of our diverse society.

2005 GEEP GRANT APPLICATIONS NOW ACCEPTED

In its second year, with your support of this vital program, REF seeks to double the amount available, for a total of \$20,000. Each grant award will be a maximum of \$2,000, with additional sums allocated for new technologies and equipment. A \$5,000 sub allocation will be made available to administrators and teachers for conferences geared toward professional development and brain-based learning. Application deadline is February 11, 2005. Find the GEEP application at reddingeducationfoundation.org. For more information, please contact Cathy Slavin at slavins@optonline.net.

LOOKING FORWARD: REF PROJECTS FOR 2005

Here, a quick look at two new committees organized by REF. If you are interested in helping out with either of these initiatives, please contact the REF board member indicated (and see back page for more volunteer opportunities).

The Brain Learning Connection

Learning how we learn will be an REF focus in sharing the latest developments in neuroscience and brain research. The implications of recent discoveries on how we develop our intelligence, learn and live more effectively are significant for everyone from infants to the elderly. Advances in imaging technologies have allowed a clear view of how the brain develops, processes information, memorizes and conducts our emotions. REF will share resources through book donations to the Mark Twain Library, articles and a newsletter. With your interest and input, we happily will organize book discussion groups and community conversations with experts. Our goal is to raise \$2,500 for the cost of a webpage, newsletter, and speakers program. See insert for further details.

For more information, please contact Kate Ebbott at 938-8383, 2katydid@optonline.net.

The Cultural Committee

The goal of this committee is to initiate and support cultural projects and programs, reaching out to the schools, residents and other groups seeking resources, financial and otherwise. Recognizing that Redding is a town with a large population of people in the creative fields, we seek to mobilize and showcase our local talent and look forward to hearing your ideas on how to do so. Last year, REF helped coalesce people interested in supporting theater in town, to respond to a proposal on the part of Georgetown Land Development to build a performing arts center in Georgetown. REF pledged the seed money needed to form a nonprofit organization of its own, called the Wire Mill Arts Foundation. That group is currently working with Georgetown Land Development to further plans for the proposed arts center, called The Wire Mill Center for the Arts. In the schools, REF has supported the JBHS campaign to send choral members to Carnegie Hall and the theater program at JRMS. REF also sponsored a John Read Middle School Odyssey of the Mind team which competed in a world-wide competition in Washington, D.C.

For more information, please contact Diane di Costanzo at 544-9505, thedicos@optonline.net.

OUR THANKS TO ALL WHO DONATED TO THE REDDING EDUCATION FOUNDATION

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REF also extends our gratitude to all of our anonymous donors.

Donors who contributed funds that were matched corporately are recognized at the total matched level.

REF is grateful for the services of Carolyn Stenerson, graphic designer for this newsletter.

CAN YOU VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME?

Redding residents' time and energy are just as important to us as the funding we solicit from the community. **Please contact us at info@reddingeducationfoundation.org or fill out enclosed form on the back of the donor card and mail to P.O. Box 1329, Redding, CT 06875.**

If you have 5 minutes:

Send us your email address, so that we can save on postage. REF will not barter, share, or otherwise compromise the security of your email address. Support Redding's Education Foundation innovative educational programs by making a donation via the Donate Now button on our website's secure server, or mail to P.O. Box 1329 Redding CT 06875.

If you have an extra 15 minutes:

Send us your ideas and concerns. We value your thoughtful comments on our efforts and direction. (See contact info, above.) Check our web site for links of interest to educational publications and the latest on learning beyond Redding's borders. Do you have links to suggest?

If you have an occasional morning or evening to share:

REF needs helping heads and hands. Request that your name be added to our Volunteer List and you will be invited for coffee, conversation and easy administrative work.

REF runs adhoc advisory committees on technology, web site management, public relations and strategic planning. Can we call on you for a discrete project or to consult occasionally?

If you want to make a finite project your own or be part of a committee with a finite time frame:

Brain Based Learning Initiative (see insert)

The Greenhouse Committee: To research the feasibility, use, construction and maintenance costs, as well as timetable for a community greenhouse. Persons knowledgeable about horticulture, green construction, and project management are most welcome.

Donor Management System: To help support the technical aspects of setting up a donor management system.

If you'd like to be part of a standing committee:

The Grants for the Enhancement of Educational Practice (see page 2)
 The Cultural Committee (see page 3)
 The Technology Committee.
 Development and Outreach Committee