

PRESS RELEASE - AVON EDUCATION FOUNDATION

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Joanne Beers, Chair

(860) 673-2495

An Unexpected Donation Helps the Foundation Meet Its Financial Goals

The Avon Education Foundation (AEF) got a surprise contribution of more than \$1,500 this year when retiring Superintendent of Avon Public Schools, Dr. Richard Kisiel, asked that any retirement gift donations go to the AEF. This was announced at the recent reception celebrating his many significant career accomplishments. The Foundation is thankful for the generosity of Dr. Kisiel's 170 friends, colleagues and well wishers who contributed to this unexpected donation:

Alan Addley, Jean Alvarez-Calderon, Jane Arciero, June Barta, Jason Beaudin, Joanne Beers, Susan Bertolini, Stacey Biernat, Kathleen Binkowski, Cara Boland, Judy Borus, Gene Bourquin, Helen Byus, Josie Cannella, Lorraine Canty, Jenessa Carey, Tom Carey, Kevin D. Case, Ann Marie Castle, Ralph Cerrato, Claire Cerrato, Christine Chinni, Joseph Cirasuolo, Barbara Clark, Lisa Cleveland, Jason Cleveland, Marilyn Cohen, Doreen Cohn, Chrissy Colbert, Crisanne Colgan, Ginny Conn, Jane Cowdrey, Lora Curtis, John Czepiel, Gail Dahling-Hench, Barbara Daly-Byrnes, Ann Dearstyne, Joyce DeFrancesco, Lil Diachenko, James DiPace, Janet DiPace, Dennis Dix, Orazio Donato, Bruce Douglas, Karen Drake, Suzanne Drapeau, Michael Eagen, Jon Elliott, David Erwin, Douglas Evans, Marco Famiglietti, Deb Famiglietti, Kerri Lynn Faselle, Len Fenelon, Elizabeth Feser, Dana Finello, Anna Forlenza-Bailey, Gary Franzi, Ron Friedman, Pam Friedman, Peter Gaski, Jess Giannini, Kristen Gilbert, Jody Goeler, Nora Goeler, Caryl Goldberg, Debra Grainsky, Christopher Grgach, Carolyn Hallifax, Jill Harris, Jim Harris, Joanne Hausmann, Sue Henneberry, Bill Hickey, Richard Hines, Beth Hudson, Dave Hutchinson, Dee Hutchinson, Lissa Irvine, Joan Jacobs, Kerry Jones, Drake Karen, Tom Kawiecki, Janice Kisiel, Gladys Knybell, Robert Kozaczka, Jodi Kryzanski, Caroline LaMonica, Linda Lareau, Dianne Lester, Diane Lieberfarb, Gregory Little, Dennis Lobo, Ruth Lobo, Karla Lopez, Houston Lowry, Kathryn Lowry, Chris Mancini, Lori Maniatis, Kathy Marzano, Kate Matos, Bernadette Mayer, Sue McCabe, Ann McCarthy, Juliana McCormick, Tom McNeill, Edith Meade, Craig Meuser, Steve Muench, Nancy Muench, Elena Musto, Mark Nolan, Ken Notestine, Anne O'Brien, Jeana Occhialini, Kathleen Ouellette, David Paul, David Pena, Mardelle Pena, Jane Ellen Peregrin, Gloria Pereira, Ernest Perlini, Evan Pitkoff, Sherri Poi, Ray Powell, Janet Powell, Kathi Rafferty, Scott Ratchford, Mark Rinaldo, Blythe Robinson, Peggy Roell, Bill Roell, Patty Roselli, Phil Schenck, Rachel Schwartz, Lisa Schwoerke, Art Shahverdian, Pam Shand, Kelli Shea, Robert Siminski, Frank Sippy, Mrs. Sippy, Ewa Sliwowski, Pat Smith, Larry Sparks, Debby Stiebel, William Stokesbury, Phil Streifer, Laura Sullivan, Jeff Sunblade, Lydia Tedone, Tony Torre, Alva Torre, Joe Townsley, Martin Toyen, Heather Toyen-Weiss, Barbara Tuocco, Jo-Ann Turcotte, Diane Ullman, Bob Villanova, Ginny Vocelli, Robert Wojtek, Rosie Wojtek, Dan Volpe, Anne Watson, Cindy Werner, Mary Alice Widness, Deb Zacchio, Mark Zacchio, Betsy Zalaski, Barbara Zuras

Independent of the surprise gift, Joanne Beers, AEF Chair, and Sue Bertolini, its founder, presented Dr. Kisiel a plaque announcing that an AEF grant will be named in his honor next year. Dr. Kisiel has enthusiastically supported the Foundation from its conception in 2003 to the present day. He has encouraged Avon's teachers and administrators to develop and try new approaches to teaching; he has helped the Foundation understand the need for and the benefits of these projects; and he has seen that successful pilot programs continue beyond their initial funding.

Since its founding, the AEF has awarded over \$137,000 to 48 educational

projects for Avon's public school students and residents. During the 2008-2009 academic year, the AEF awarded grants to projects:

- expanding the successful 2007-2008 pilot of the Hartford Stage Arts and Literacy Connections program to grades 1 through 6 at Roaring Brook School and Thompson Brook School,
- developing a nature trail and building an outdoor amphitheater for the "Unplugged Learning Project,"
- updating *A is for Avon*, authored by middle school teacher Jan Brennan, used in second grade civics for the last 30 years,
- piloting the use of graphic novels in third grade reading instruction at Pine Grove School,
- applying digital visualizer technology to high school writing classes,
- acquiring a collection of 222 non-fiction and reference eBooks, with a print value of approximately \$92,000, that will be available online 24-by-7 to all high school students and faculty, and
- bringing three "Lost Boys" of the Sudan to the Avon High School, Middle School and Free Public Library to tell their story of surviving the atrocities in Darfur to the entire community in October 2009.

In addition, the AEF made its first "Pavers for Posterity" grant to the high school theater program to acquire wireless microphones to enhance productions and technical theater instruction. The "Pavers for Posterity" fundraiser is ongoing, and monies raised through the sale of engraved pavers for the student entrance walkway at Avon High School are earmarked to support arts education in Avon. Pavers make a wonderful gift in honor of graduating seniors as well as entering freshman and other special people, and a certificate will be provided when a paver is given as a gift.

Even though this has been a financially challenging year, the AEF is heartened by the generosity of the Avon community. Turnout for the fundraiser at Flatbread Company in Canton was great and gave the AEF a chance to meet many of its supporters in person while also raising \$300. Donations under the C.H.E.E.R! for Education—Celebrate and Honor Exceptional EducatoRs—program are up compared to last year. For a donation as small as \$10, families can recognize the contribution a special teacher, staff member or other friend of education is making to the education of their children. The following have been honored with C.H.E.E.R! certificates so far this school year:

AVON DISTRICT: Doreen Cohn, The Lounge Lizards; **AVON HIGH SCHOOL:** Cara Boland, Will Boudreau, Andrew Brochu, Mark Burgess, Andrew Dorr, Suzanne Drapeau, Mike Fernandes, Jamaal Lee, Diane Lieberfarb, Jeff Lombardo, John McLouchlin, David Raposo, Eric Rosow, Scott Tinker, Sherry Zaslow; **AVON MIDDLE SCHOOL:** Jan Brennan, Lil Diachenko, Donald Fantozzi, Margaret Kaseta, Tom Kawiecki, Ed Leahy, Mary Beth LeFevre, John Mason, Nicole Weisbaum; **PINE GROVE SCHOOL:** Karen Kane, Jonathan Moss, Jeanna Occhialini; **ROARING BROOK SCHOOL:**

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Betsy Cartona, Kevin Caselli, Joan Clafin, Rosanne Civittolo, Anne Marie Feeney, Lisa Fenn, Renee Kuhrt, Michele Lemis, Kerry Lurate, Judy Marks, Laura McDonnell, Sally Pirla, Nancy Wall, Sue Winterson; **THOMPSON BROOK SCHOOL:** Brendan Lynch, Allison Schulman

The Foundation is partnering again this year with the Avon Chapter of UNICO on its 25th Annual Golf Tournament Wednesday, July 22 at Tunxis Plantation Country Club. Golfers, sponsors and volunteers are encouraged to join both organizations for this fun event. Planning is beginning for a gala and auction co-sponsored with the Avon High School Parent Teacher Organization on Saturday, April 10, 2010 at Avon Old Farms Hotel.

At a time when growth in public funding for education and town services is being held to a minimum and painful budget decisions are being made, the mission of the Avon Education Foundation has never been more important: to improve the quality of public education in Avon for all residents by creating opportunities for inspired educators and students. The AEF thanks everyone who contributed to the gift in tribute to Dr. Kisiel and all of its other donors, supporters and volunteers who make it possible to achieve its mission.

For information about the Foundation, the grants it has made, its upcoming events and how to get involved, visit its website: www.avonedfoundation.org. The Avon Education Foundation is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization.