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Press Release

Avon Education Foundation

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The Avon Education Foundation (AEF) announced six 2008-2009 grant recipients during its Prize Patrol presentations on Friday, March 13. Awards total nearly \$33,000 and support the enhancement of public education in the town of Avon.

A \$10,000 grant named for The Duffy Family will help bring the Hartford Stage Arts and Literacy Connections Program to all K-6 students at Thompson Brook (TBS) and Roaring Brook Schools (RBS). The Connections Program returns to Avon on the heels of last year's well-received fourth grade pilot program at RBS funded by an AEF Mini Grant. Over the course of five days, visiting artists in each classroom explore a grade-appropriate core-curriculum book through the dramatic arts. Mike DeRitis of TBS is directing the project with the cooperation of team leaders for each grade.

The Avon High School theater program, under the direction of Doreen Cohn, received \$10,000 to fund the purchase of sound equipment, including twelve wireless microphones, to enhance dramatic productions, augment technical theater instruction and complement the recent renovation of the stage area in the auditorium. By reducing the recurring production costs of microphone rentals, the theater program will be able to use its proceeds from ticket sales to expand theater opportunities for students. This grant is funded by AEF's **Pavers for Posterity** program to support arts education in Avon.

Avon Middle School teacher Jan Brennan received \$6,000, funded in part by the 2009 UNICO Grant, to update and re-issue her 1979 alphabet book, A is for Avon. The book, which highlights points of historical interest in the town, is being updated by a volunteer group of 25 seventh-graders under Ms. Brennan's supervision and will continue to be used in the second grade civic history unit. Copies will be available in all five public school libraries and the Avon Free Public Library. The Avon Historical Society will be involved in its distribution and promotion.

The Avon Free Public Library was granted \$3,500 towards hosting authors Alepho Deng, Benson Deng, and Benjamin Ajak, three "Lost Boys of the Sudan" whose autobiography, They Poured Fire on Us from the Sky, recounts their survival of the ongoing genocide in Darfur. The event is scheduled for October 2009.

Avon High School English teacher Sharon Wendler received \$2,000 to pilot the use of digital visualizers for writing instruction. Also known as a document camera, the device can project images from bulky 3-D texts in real time or store them for later use, such as posting to a web site.

Pine Grove School teachers Christopher Grgach and Jonathan Moss received \$950 for their proposal to improve small-group reading instruction through the

introduction of “graphic novels,” a diverse category of books that use drawings to enhance the story. Graphic novels have been found to be very effective in encouraging boys to read. The grant will fund the purchase of texts leveled on the Fountas and Pinnell Guided Reading rating system to benefit different types of learners in the third grade.

The Avon Education Foundation is a not-for-profit tax-exempt organization operated entirely by volunteers. Since its founding in 2003, the AEF has awarded over \$130,000 for projects to enhance learning opportunities in Avon. In 2006 the AEF made a grant to help get the Town-wide Choral Festival established. This year, choral music students in grades 4 through 12 again will perform in Mortenson Hall at The Bushnell in Hartford on Wednesday, April 1 at 7:00 pm. Tickets are available through all of the Avon public schools.

To learn more about the Avon Education Foundation, visit its website: www.avonedfoundation.org. Meet members of the board of directors at their fundraiser at Flatbread Company in the Shoppes at Farmington Valley in Canton on Tuesday, May 19th.