

## PRESS RELEASE – OCTOBER 4, 2011

The Avon Education Foundation (AEF) received the Foundation Celebration Award from the Connecticut Consortium of Education Foundations (CTCEF) at its annual conference on Tuesday, October 4th. The award recognizes the AEF for "creating outstanding educational opportunities within their local community."

In announcing Avon as the recipient of this award, Dr. Joseph Erardi, CTCEF board member and Superintendent of Southington Public Schools, noted that the AEF has given grants totaling almost \$200,000 since its incorporation in 2004. Grants have ranged from large to small in varied subject areas and technology. Avon learners of all ages have benefitted with grants going to each of the five public schools, Avon Free Public Library and the Avon Senior Center.



There to celebrate the award, L to R: Beth Zweibel, AEF Vice Chair; Sue Durant, AEF Founder; Jody Goeler, Superintendent Region 14 Public Schools and former Assistant Superintendent Avon Public Schools; Joanne Beers, AEF Chair; and Peggy Roell, Chair Avon Board of Education.

Joanne Beers, AEF Chair, said "we are thrilled to receive this honor." There are 91 active education foundations in the state of Connecticut, and the CTCEF picks only 1 to receive the Foundation Celebration Award for its accomplishments each year.

In its submission leading to this award, the Foundation said it believes that its accomplishments are not measured in terms of what the AEF did this year but by the contribution it is making over time to the success of public education in the Town of Avon:

- Avon High School was recently ranked 281 out of the top 500 schools in the country by *Newsweek*. Only 12 Connecticut high schools made this list, and Avon placed 5<sup>th</sup> in that group. In addition, Avon High School was ranked the number 1 non-magnet public school in the region by *Hartford Magazine* for the third year in a row.
- The only teachers from Connecticut selected as second round finalists for the 2011 US Partners in Learning Innovative Education Forum are from Avon: Lisa Fenn and Laura McDonnell, first grade teachers at Roaring Brook School. They were selected for their "Leaping into Learning" project which was started with a 2008 grant from the AEF. This is a 4-week lesson in scientific inquiry for first graders that investigates the frog life cycle filling a void in the science curriculum and promoting cooperation between the two K through grade 4 schools in Avon.
- Thompson Brook School, which opened its doors as Avon's grade 5 and 6 school in 2002, was selected as a National Blue Ribbon School in 2010. Of the 10 Connecticut schools receiving the honor last year, only Smith Middle School in Glastonbury and Thompson Brook School are public schools. In 2011, all of the classroom teachers at Thompson Brook School partnered on a grant application, "Classroom Access to 21st Century Technology," winning the largest grant award the Foundation has made to date. The grant provides funds to upgrade technology in every 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade classroom. With the upgraded technology, teachers and students will be able to integrate Google Maps into geography and history lessons, interact with other classrooms in the building or around the world via Skype, take virtual field trips and access internet based content to enhance learning in all subject areas. They can use the SMART Board interactive software the school already owns even without the touch screen hardware.
- Avon Middle School was named Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS) Middle School of the Year in 2006-2007 because its "students consistently...lead the way in academic success in state

and national exams and competitions such the national French exams, word masters and the New England Math League." In 2006, the school was the first recipient of a "big" (\$10,000) grant for a Mobile Research Lab, including laptop computers, scientific probeware and graphing calculators, to enhance math and science learning outcomes. In 2010 the middle school received a mini-grant towards new tennis courts. Among other things, this will enable Avon's Unified Sports program, which pairs special athletes with non-disabled peers, to include tennis. The physical education curriculum will be expanded to include tennis and racquetball for all students and access to tennis will be increased for all community members.

According the AEF, "Since our founding, our goal has been to mobilize the financial and human resources needed to make sure that the school children and residents of Avon have the best educational opportunities available anywhere. We value innovation and creativity and encourage collaboration across departments, schools and the community. We believe the Avon Education Foundation has contributed to the recognition our schools, programs and teachers have received locally, regionally and nationally."

The AEF is a 501(c)(3) not for profit organization dependent entirely on donations and volunteers for its success. It is a member of the CTCEF ([www.ctcef.org](http://www.ctcef.org)) and the Avon Chamber of Commerce ([www.avonchamber.com](http://www.avonchamber.com)). Learn more about the Foundation at its website, [www.avonedfoundation.org](http://www.avonedfoundation.org), and on its Facebook page, <http://www.facebook.com/AvonEdFoundation>.