

Written by: Melissa Gagne, AEF volunteer

**“Avon Education Foundation “Grants” the Wishes of Dedicated Teachers: Avon Students of All Ages Will Benefit.”**

The Avon Education Foundation (AEF) “Prize Patrol” was busy this week, surprising teachers and administrators throughout the district with the news that their grant proposals had been approved. Over \$27,000 will be distributed in Grants (up to \$10,000), Mini Grants (up to \$1,500) and the first ever AEF Service Award to provide students and the community as a whole with innovative and unique learning experiences.

Teachers submitted their proposals in November of 2006. The AEF has met a number of times since then to review the proposals, speak with the teachers and make their final decision. The grants that have been approved for the 2006-2007 school year are:

- **“The Pine Grove Community Nature Trail.”** The largest grant this year goes to a collaboration between Pine Grove School (PGS), the Parent-Teacher Organizations (PTO) of both Pine Grove and Thompson Brook Schools, and the Special Education Parent Teacher Association (SEPTA). Also represented on the project are the Avon Boy and Girl Scouts, the Avon Land Trust and Farmington Valley Watershed. The community project leader is Mrs. Leigh Ann Bacevich, with Gail Dahling-Hench (principal of PGS) acting as the school system project director. The mission is “to provide a fun and educational classroom where the whole community can explore, learn, and develop a relationship with one another and nature.” The trail is on approximately two acres of woodland and wetland area owned by the Board of Education, and it will be developed to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). There will be eight outdoor classrooms designed around specific natural science components including a colonial garden, bird watching, trees and pond life. After-school hours will be available for the Scouts to earn badges and for learning opportunities the whole community can enjoy.
- **“The Leo and Jean Duffy Memorial Grant: Fitness for the Future.”** This project was submitted by the Avon Physical Education Staff with Tim Feshler acting as project director. The mission is to promote life-long physical activity and affect the recent trend of lower scores on the Connecticut State Fitness Test. The Physical Education Staff will be able to monitor fitness trends across the district, as well as at the individual level, and use this information for the development and evaluation of new instructional initiatives.
- **“Citibank Grant: Leadership for Life.”** This grant was submitted by Lou Pelligrino, a Social Studies teacher at Avon High School, and has been funded by a donation from Citibank who recently opened a financial center in Avon. The goal of this project will be to provide students with the skills they need to become successful leaders. The program will be delivered through conferences, workshops, and seminars featuring business, education, and civic leaders from Avon and the greater Hartford community.
- **“Avon Chapter of UNICO Mini Grant: Dallas Brass Performs in Avon.”** This mini grant was submitted by the Avon Music Department, and David Winer from Avon High School is the project director. UNICO is the largest Italian American service organization in the country. Additional support for the program is coming from Friends of Avon Band and Chorus and ticket sales for the evening performance. The program brings a unique opportunity for music students to participate in a one-day

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residency with world-class musicians. Students will attend a workshop during the day with some invited to join an extended rehearsal and perform in a once-in-a-lifetime concert that evening.

- **“Farmington Savings Bank Mini Grant: WAVN TBS Podcasting.”** This initiative was submitted by Mary Ramondetta, sixth grade teacher at Thompson Brook School. Podcasting is the digital recording of a radio broadcast (or similar program) that is then made available on the internet for download to a personal audio player. This cutting edge technology will enable students to create podcasts on specific Language Arts and Social Studies subjects. These podcasts will be published to the web and can then be used by teachers and students all over the country.
- **The AEF Service Award**, also funded by the **Farmington Savings Bank**, is being presented for the first time to Doreen Cohn, district Technology Integration Coordinator for grades K-12. This award acknowledges Mrs. Cohn’s contributions to the AEF over the last three years, and will enable her to work with the Avon Middle School to pilot the use of personal audio player technology in World Language Studies.
- **“The Plant Mobile”** mini grant was submitted by Scott Percival and Natalie Carlone, both teachers at Avon High School. This project is specifically designed to give special education students an opportunity to interact with their peers and experience scientific concepts in a concrete and hands-on manner. Students will grow flowers, plants, and herbs that they will eventually sell, providing them with useful vocational skills. Specific areas of Horticulture will be taught collaboratively by the Science and Special Education departments within a sophomore Biology class encouraging students of all abilities to work together.
- **“LEGOs-Not Just for Playtime Anymore,”** was submitted by Janet Loynes a Science teacher at Avon High School. This mini grant will provide students with the opportunity to learn about the structure of DNA by building models using LEGO elements representing its components. Students will also learn how chromosomes affect the characteristics of offspring as they build fish out of LEGOS representing genes. With these tools, students will be walking in the steps of Nobel Prize winning scientists Watson and Crick as they deduced the structure of DNA with the cardboard and wire models they created.

The Avon Education Foundation is an all volunteer, non-profit organization that works to raise money to enhance the education of all students in Avon. The AEF congratulates all grant recipients. To learn more about the Foundation or to make a donation, please visit <http://www.avonedfoundation.org>.