

engage

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“As a former teacher and administrator, I take great satisfaction in serving on the Foundation Board because it empowers donors to DIRECTLY impact learning at many levels. I enjoy the opportunity to continue engaging and encouraging students in classrooms across the city.”

- Kathleen Thompson, Board Secretary



2020-2021 BOARD TRUSTEES AND PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS



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Zach Shields

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Decatur Public Schools Foundation

New Trustees are nominated, evaluated and approved for admission by current Board members, with input from active prior members and founding directors. Trustees are elected to three-year terms, which can be renewed once, for a total service tenure of six years.



OUR TRUSTEES

The Decatur Public Schools Foundation owes its existence to the foresight of our original stakeholders. They recognized that public schools across the country were facing financial challenges that would only grow more daunting. They established the Foundation and defined its mission to organize private resources in support of District 61. Reviewing the **list of past Trustees** reveals why our organization has been so successful. The roster includes names fully devoted to this community, many of whom remain active participants in charting Decatur’s future. We’re proud to count such individuals as friends and continual advisors.

“The importance of a public school education cannot be overstated. I believe a public education provides our young citizens with a sound academic foundation, an exposure to diversity, lifelong friends, and perhaps most importantly in these times, the ability to think clearly and independently. It is for these reasons that I am pleased to serve on the Foundation board.”

– Judge Tom Little

PAST FOUNDATION TRUSTEES

In chronological order of service

Jeff Black, John Cobb, Adele Glenn, Jane Johnson, Kim Leftwich, Peggy Madden, Bill Oliver, Dr. Bill Requarth, Bob Smith, Tom Swartz, Dr. Ken Arndt, Jackie Goetter, Monica Hawkins, Pat Laeger, Cindy Neff, Chris Olsen, John Hedges, Helen Miller, Mac McPherson, Keith Casteel, Craig Huss, Duane Noland, Marilyn Davis, Ruth Cortright, Gary Likins, Gary McElfresh, Richard Demirjian, Alida Graham, Wole Adeoye, John Funk, Mike Gibson, Jan Mandernach, Lisa Holder White, Gloria J. Davis, Janis Kirby, Dave Butts, Jason Small, Lucy Smith, Tom Binder, Jim Forrester, Wendy Morthland, Brian Byers, T.J. Jackson, Jan Kelsheimer, Ron Pulera, Dan Winter, Tiffany Lukis, Stephen Pyle, Val Talley, Shirley Kistler, Dave Weber, Larry Altenbaumer, Shelith Hansbro, Daetta Jones, Brian Hodges, Lisa Taylor, Ryan McCrady, Sherri Perkins, Dr. Todd Werpy, Bobbi Williams, Judge Tom Little, Amy C. Ridley, Michael Allen



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

In 1997, most school foundations across the country were just beginning to find their footing. These organizations varied widely in terms of size, scope, financial support and the breadth of their ambition. Some shot to simply offer a few modest classroom grants per year; others took aim on major programs that spelled opportunities for students all across their school districts.

That year, community leaders adopting the long view established the Decatur Public Schools Foundation to promote both approaches. In 2004, the Foundation provided \$30,000 to support grant activities. By 2013 that number had climbed to around \$250,000. In 2019, our donors contributed **\$924,563** in direct provision of classroom grants and special projects.

Since incorporation the Foundation's individual and corporate partners have provided **more than \$14 million** to afford young people in our schools the same enrichment opportunities open to kids in private and parochial settings or more affluent districts. 2020 has reminded us in no uncertain terms that little in life is a sure thing. From a global pandemic to contentious public policy debates to heartbreaking social justice struggles, we've been witnessing a whole lot that rightly alarms young people.

Amid this chaos, what our kids can be certain of – unequivocally – is that their community cares for them. Decatur wants what's best for District 61 students, now and into the future.

Every new partner means a better chance for students to **ENGAGE** as active scholars. Enhanced educational opportunities mean that they adopt an active voice in public discourse; that they have their say in how history unfolds; that they can count on a safe place to discover how this happens.

Large and small, far-reaching and focused, our Foundation partners have financed hundreds of teacher-designed and student-led projects to enrich the experience for kids in the Decatur Public Schools.

The vision set forth by our Founding Trustees has been realized thanks to incredibly generous community and corporate donors. These friends share an understanding that **support for students is an investment**, not charity. A national benchmark for school foundation programs has been estimated at \$15 per student annually. Our local level of support means that last year, Decatur

donors **invested approximately \$103** per student for each of the nearly 9,000 young people in District 61.

State and federal funding streams represent tricky waters to navigate – often with undercurrents impossible to predict ahead of time. Our organization exists to ensure that the community can connect to the classroom, that alumni feel connected to their hometown, that businesses and city leaders remain vested in the success of students who represent the largest segment of their future workforce.

When I accepted my post with the Foundation in 2013, it was because my family has always demonstrated the importance of curiosity and lifelong learning. I'd been aware of the organization's efforts, but only in a peripheral manner. From a distance it seemed like there were inventive activities afoot. It seemed like there was a positive vibe behind grant programs. It seemed, in short, like a lot of fun.

Over the seven years since, it HAS been fun. It has also provided a window to observe the challenges faced by teachers in a society that undervalues their importance, and for students who face daily struggles before even boarding the bus.

We exist to combat these realities. We investigate **what works** and **what ENGAGES** and **what inspires**.

I invite you to migrate from the periphery to the heart of what we do. Call. Write. Stop by and say Hi. However you prefer, get in touch to tell us what motivates you to support education. We'll work together to **ENGAGE YOU** in our current momentum – and discover what happens next.

Best,

Zach Shields

Executive Director, Decatur Public Schools Foundation

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The Decatur Public Schools Foundation is a privately-funded, tax-exempt organization. Its mission is to acquire and distribute resources to Decatur Public Schools to enhance, enrich and encourage learning opportunities for its students, staff and community. It is directed by a volunteer Board of Trustees and operates independently to generate financial and in-kind support for DPS District 61.



The Decatur Public Schools Foundation exists to support the Decatur Public Schools as our donors invest in the lifelong success of ALL students in our district.

In my third year as Chair, I continue to be amazed at the passion that is brought forth in funding requests to The Decatur Public Schools Foundation. District 61 is blessed to have an incredible staff that continually strives to create learning environments that advance their students and prepare them as lifelong learners. As we work towards becoming a **Destination District**, it is critical that DPS 61 schools and teachers have access to cutting edge technology, first-rate fine arts programming, top notch materials, and indoor and outdoor spaces that foster growth, creativity and hands-on learning. Our Foundation partners continue to provide funds for exceptional ideas and innovative instruction. The grants offered to DPS 61 staff give them permission to dream and engage their students in unique learning experiences.

The **Dwayne O. Andreas Ag Academy** is thriving in its second year thanks to the continued generosity of the **Howard G. Buffett Foundation**. Student enrollment has grown steadily, and a third Ag educator has been hired to teach at both high schools. The newly established FFA programs are flourishing as our students realize the potential for leadership experiences. The Ag Academy design has also allowed the Foundation to further support the elementary buildings by coordinating 4-H activities supported by long-time partner **ADM**. This programming has helped to establish a pipeline from earlier grade levels feeding up into the Academy. Stephen Decatur Middle School, now housing all middle school students in the district, has created three academies to foster student selection of classes that interest them and expose them to a variety of career paths, one of which is also aimed at exploring careers in the agriculture industry.

Fall of 2020 has seen the implementation of the **Jerry J. Dawson Civic Leadership Institute**, an eight-year program designed to promote civic engagement, leadership skills and opportunities for students to explore jobs in public service. This multi-year program at the high school level is another example of how private donor partners such as the **Howard G. Buffett Foundation** – which has also underwritten this special initiative – connect their passions to our public-school system to expose students to life beyond the classroom.

Multiple funds within the Foundation support student enrichment that have been established by individual community members, including alumni, parents and business leaders. Areas of focus include music, literacy, excursions, science, athletics, drama, pre-kindergarten, and math.

As a Decatur citizen invested in many ways in the success of our community's future, I encourage you to visit one of the buildings within our district to see the enthusiasm firsthand. If you would like to support our mission to enhance, enrich and encourage learning opportunities for students and teachers, please contact the Foundation office. We are **#dpsproud** and excited for the future!



Regan Andreas Deering

Chair, Decatur Public Schools Foundation
reganandreas@hotmail.com

REGAN
ANDREAS
DEERING

Chair, Decatur Public Schools Foundation

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

The Decatur Public Schools Foundation provides private (non-taxpayer) funding for grants and special programs in the following broad categories:

2012-2013 - \$510,254

Business gifts – \$109,170
Individuals/Family Foundation gifts – \$334,806
Interest/Investments/etc. – \$66,278

2013-2014 - \$739,000

Business gifts – \$241,700
Individuals/Family Foundation gifts – \$410,267
Interest/Investments/etc. – \$87,032

2014-2015 - \$551,259

Business gifts – \$232,619
Individuals/Family Foundation gifts – \$284,517
Interest/Investments/etc. – \$34,123

2015-2016 - \$344,617

Business gifts – \$122,388
Individuals/Family Foundation gifts – \$216,467
Interest/Investments/etc. – \$5,762

2016-2017 - \$688,552

Business gifts – \$243,036
Individuals/Family Foundation gifts – \$354,424
Interest/Investments/etc. – \$91,092

THE ARTS, GENERAL ENRICHMENT, LITERACY, SCHOOL & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, STEM (SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATH)

2017-2018 - \$2,242,212

Business gifts – \$231,595
Individuals/Family Foundation gifts – \$1,938,213
Interest/Investments/etc. – \$72,404

2018-2019 - \$747,337

Business gifts – \$297,585
Individuals/Family Foundation gifts – \$396,938
Interest/Investments/etc. – \$52,814

2019-2020 - \$2,967,630

Business gifts – \$334,064
Individuals/Family Foundation gifts – \$2,611,924
Interest/Investments/etc. – \$21,642

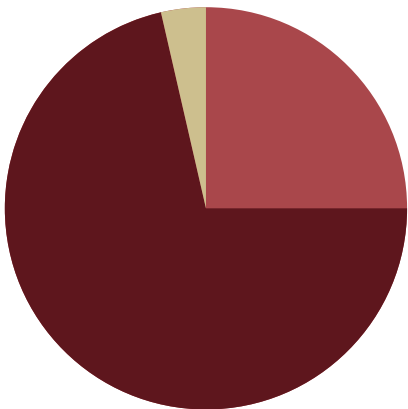
2020-2021* - \$610,333

Business gifts – \$215,760
Individuals/Family Foundation gifts – \$353,639
Interest/Investments/etc. – \$40,934

**Year-to-date July 1, 2020 to November 30, 2020*

2012-2020 TOTAL:

\$9,401,194



INDIVIDUALS/FAMILIES/OTHER GIFTS
\$6,901,195 (73%)

BUSINESS GIFTS
\$2,027,917 (22%)

INTEREST/INVESTMENTS/ETC.
\$472,082 (5%)

Numerous Friends of the Foundation make this programming possible. Thank you to those individuals, families and business partners who have supported our mission so consistently. Several friends listed here have passed away since making these gifts, but our staff and Trustees wish to recognize their contributions to the Foundation within this comprehensive multi-year report.

ADM	Jonothan Best	Betty Cave	Dennis Community Co-Op
Chuck and Barbara Ahlenius	Sally (Madden) Betscher	CEFCU	Dianne Devore
Ardith Aldrich	Tom and Mary Binder	Central Christian Church	Jan Devore
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Alpha Chi Omega	Black & Co.	Leslie Chandler	Jim Dollahan
Alpha Delta Kappa Gamma	Jeff Black and Family	Dennis and Linda Chatham	Sandra Dotson
Larry and Dee Altenbaumer	Donald Blankenship	Chicago Mercantile Exchange	Dennis and Deborah Downey
Amazon Smiles	BLDD Architects	James and Carole Christman	Jonathan Downing
Ameren	Bob Brady Automall	Pamela and Craig Church	Mary Durnil
American Association of Blacks in Energy	Bob Jones Music Fund	Brenda and Patrick Clark	Earthmover Credit Union
Amherst Hardy Foundation	Jack and Laura Bodine	Bob and Michelle Cleave	Nancy Eichenauer
Laura Anderson	Bill and Deanna Bohnsack	John and Susan Cobb	Eisenhower High School Class of 1963
Mick and Sally Andreas	Michelle Bonebrake	Jack Coffman	Eisenhower High School Class of 1968
Andreas Foundation	Fred and Michelle Bouchard	Carol and Daniel Collins	Rose Ann (Elzy) Elston
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Jerry and Carol Pelz	Robert Rushton	Stephanie Strang	Dave and Liz Weber
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Fran Peterson	Ann and Edmond Sawyer	Phil Tapscott	Angie Wetzel
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N.K. Pridemore	Terry and Christina Shields	Judy and Randy Taylor	Stan Wood
David Pritts	Vi Shields	The Cubby Hole	Mike and Mary Wortman
Steve and Elizabeth Pyle	Sarah Shupenus	The Lake Patrol Boys	WSOY Community Food Drive
Betty Query Smith	Sigma Alpha Iota Alumni	Morton Thompson	Tanya Young
John Redman	Sushant Sinha	Herbert and Sharon Thompson	Young Philanthropists
	SIU School of Medicine	Donna Thompson	Amy Zahm-Duncheon

HONOR & MEMORIAL GIFTS

Franklin Building Fund Wendy Morthland	In Memory of G. William Madden Peggy Madden Sally (Madden) Betscher	In Honor of Lucy and Bob Smith Dave Smith	In Memory of Bob Jones Nancy Grandys Jones Theresa Kotlowski Albert and Elizabeth Krza Debra Sattler	In Memory of Ellen Spycher Martha Henderson Will and Nanette Krueger Bruce and Kay Nims Family Rich Spycher Richie Spycher, Jr.	In Memory of Loren “Doug” Hagen Ayn Owens Dianne Devore Wally Miller Gary Murfin Bill and Deanna Bohnsack Rose Ann (Elzy) Elston Viron Moore Fran Peterson Cecile H. Weintraub Barbara Ann Korte MacArthur Class of 1964 Paulette Browne Steve and Elizabeth Pyle Grant Vaught Thomas and Colleen Vaughn Jim Sober Judy Waldrop Susan Miller Gary Upp William O. Bass Deborah Cargill Michael Hagen Norma J. Graves Susan Bell Mature Markets, Inc.	In Memory of Mildred McAdam Karla and Joe McAdam Don and Sylvia McAdam Annette M. Roberts Paul and Verlyn Rosenberger	In Memory of Tamara Rushton Brenda and Patrick Clark Kris Conley Julie Hudson Trisha and Chad Isaac Michael and Linda Martin Kay and Bruce Mason Tena and Gregory Matas Suzanne and Alan Morr Robert Rushton Ann and Edmond Sawyer
In Memory of Mildred McAdam Nancy Eichenauer Larry and Shelby Lawler Susie Marshall Jason Mohler Rosemarie Mohler and Family Nancy Marie Stokes Veit Trust John and Cindy Sellers John and Rae Nell Spencer Morton Thompson	In Honor of Glenda Dicken Houghton Eisenhower High School Class of 1963	In Honor of Maggie (Konich) Fiock Merilee Konich	In Memory of Carol Schapmire Betty Cave Jackie Hayes Cathy and Bryan Huff Alice and John Lambrick Nancy Mains Emily Rohrscheib Stephen Smith	In Memory of Eloise Ivens Sears Ellen Hearn	In Memory of Loren “Doug” Hagen Ayn Owens Dianne Devore Wally Miller Gary Murfin Bill and Deanna Bohnsack Rose Ann (Elzy) Elston Viron Moore Fran Peterson Cecile H. Weintraub Barbara Ann Korte MacArthur Class of 1964 Paulette Browne Steve and Elizabeth Pyle Grant Vaught Thomas and Colleen Vaughn Jim Sober Judy Waldrop Susan Miller Gary Upp William O. Bass Deborah Cargill Michael Hagen Norma J. Graves Susan Bell Mature Markets, Inc.	In Memory of Mildred McAdam Karla and Joe McAdam Don and Sylvia McAdam Annette M. Roberts Paul and Verlyn Rosenberger	In Memory of Tamara Rushton Brenda and Patrick Clark Kris Conley Julie Hudson Trisha and Chad Isaac Michael and Linda Martin Kay and Bruce Mason Tena and Gregory Matas Suzanne and Alan Morr Robert Rushton Ann and Edmond Sawyer
In Honor of “Mac” McElroy The Lake Patrol Boys Randy and Amy Hanson	In Honor of Jesse Reising Mary Lou Stanley	In Honor of Marilyn Mertz Dr. Priscilla Palmer John and Jan Baird	In Memory of Carol Schapmire Betty Cave Jackie Hayes Cathy and Bryan Huff Alice and John Lambrick Nancy Mains Emily Rohrscheib Stephen Smith	In Memory of Eloise Ivens Sears Ellen Hearn	In Memory of Loren “Doug” Hagen Ayn Owens Dianne Devore Wally Miller Gary Murfin Bill and Deanna Bohnsack Rose Ann (Elzy) Elston Viron Moore Fran Peterson Cecile H. Weintraub Barbara Ann Korte MacArthur Class of 1964 Paulette Browne Steve and Elizabeth Pyle Grant Vaught Thomas and Colleen Vaughn Jim Sober Judy Waldrop Susan Miller Gary Upp William O. Bass Deborah Cargill Michael Hagen Norma J. Graves Susan Bell Mature Markets, Inc.	In Memory of Mildred McAdam Karla and Joe McAdam Don and Sylvia McAdam Annette M. Roberts Paul and Verlyn Rosenberger	In Memory of Tamara Rushton Brenda and Patrick Clark Kris Conley Julie Hudson Trisha and Chad Isaac Michael and Linda Martin Kay and Bruce Mason Tena and Gregory Matas Suzanne and Alan Morr Robert Rushton Ann and Edmond Sawyer
In Honor of ‘62 EHS State Baseball Team Carl and Irene Hanson	In Honor of Jim Culbertson and Timothy (Mark) Waller John and Susan Cobb Ruth Cortright Joanne C. Hantel Trust Gretchen Hantel Jim, Myra, Meagan, Daniel Hinze Joyce and Jack Keller Paul and Rebecca McCann Jack and Barbara Ann McCoy Betty Watkins Dave and Liz Weber	In Honor of Mike Elben C.W. (Charlie) and Mary Smith	In Memory of Claude Taylor Ruth Cortright	In Memory of Eloise Ivens Sears Ellen Hearn	In Memory of Loren “Doug” Hagen Ayn Owens Dianne Devore Wally Miller Gary Murfin Bill and Deanna Bohnsack Rose Ann (Elzy) Elston Viron Moore Fran Peterson Cecile H. Weintraub Barbara Ann Korte MacArthur Class of 1964 Paulette Browne Steve and Elizabeth Pyle Grant Vaught Thomas and Colleen Vaughn Jim Sober Judy Waldrop Susan Miller Gary Upp William O. Bass Deborah Cargill Michael Hagen Norma J. Graves Susan Bell Mature Markets, Inc.	In Memory of Mildred McAdam Karla and Joe McAdam Don and Sylvia McAdam Annette M. Roberts Paul and Verlyn Rosenberger	In Memory of Tamara Rushton Brenda and Patrick Clark Kris Conley Julie Hudson Trisha and Chad Isaac Michael and Linda Martin Kay and Bruce Mason Tena and Gregory Matas Suzanne and Alan Morr Robert Rushton Ann and Edmond Sawyer
In Honor of Bobby McLean Eisenhower High School Class of 1963	In Honor of Jim Deremiah - "Teach the Children Well" C.W. (Charlie) and Mary Smith	In Honor of Ms. Trump-Jones Melanie Brown	In Memory of David Kirtley Wilson Barb and Richard Hazelrigg	In Memory of Eloise Ivens Sears Ellen Hearn	In Memory of Loren “Doug” Hagen Ayn Owens Dianne Devore Wally Miller Gary Murfin Bill and Deanna Bohnsack Rose Ann (Elzy) Elston Viron Moore Fran Peterson Cecile H. Weintraub Barbara Ann Korte MacArthur Class of 1964 Paulette Browne Steve and Elizabeth Pyle Grant Vaught Thomas and Colleen Vaughn Jim Sober Judy Waldrop Susan Miller Gary Upp William O. Bass Deborah Cargill Michael Hagen Norma J. Graves Susan Bell Mature Markets, Inc.	In Memory of Mildred McAdam Karla and Joe McAdam Don and Sylvia McAdam Annette M. Roberts Paul and Verlyn Rosenberger	In Memory of Tamara Rushton Brenda and Patrick Clark Kris Conley Julie Hudson Trisha and Chad Isaac Michael and Linda Martin Kay and Bruce Mason Tena and Gregory Matas Suzanne and Alan Morr Robert Rushton Ann and Edmond Sawyer
In Honor of Cindy Deadrick-Wolfer Friends of Cindy	In Honor of Jim Deremiah - "Teach the Children Well" C.W. (Charlie) and Mary Smith	In Honor of Mike Elben C.W. (Charlie) and Mary Smith	In Memory of David Kirtley Wilson Barb and Richard Hazelrigg	In Memory of Eloise Ivens Sears Ellen Hearn	In Memory of Loren “Doug” Hagen Ayn Owens Dianne Devore Wally Miller Gary Murfin Bill and Deanna Bohnsack Rose Ann (Elzy) Elston Viron Moore Fran Peterson Cecile H. Weintraub Barbara Ann Korte MacArthur Class of 1964 Paulette Browne Steve and Elizabeth Pyle Grant Vaught Thomas and Colleen Vaughn Jim Sober Judy Waldrop Susan Miller Gary Upp William O. Bass Deborah Cargill Michael Hagen Norma J. Graves Susan Bell Mature Markets, Inc.	In Memory of Mildred McAdam Karla and Joe McAdam Don and Sylvia McAdam Annette M. Roberts Paul and Verlyn Rosenberger	In Memory of Tamara Rushton Brenda and Patrick Clark Kris Conley Julie Hudson Trisha and Chad Isaac Michael and Linda Martin Kay and Bruce Mason Tena and Gregory Matas Suzanne and Alan Morr Robert Rushton Ann and Edmond Sawyer
In Honor of Courtney Ferriell and Kayla Preci James Steven Greene	In Honor of Jim Deremiah - "Teach the Children Well" C.W. (Charlie) and Mary Smith	In Honor of Ms. Trump-Jones Melanie Brown	In Memory of David Kirtley Wilson Barb and Richard Hazelrigg	In Memory of Eloise Ivens Sears Ellen Hearn	In Memory of Loren “Doug” Hagen Ayn Owens Dianne Devore Wally Miller Gary Murfin Bill and Deanna Bohnsack Rose Ann (Elzy) Elston Viron Moore Fran Peterson Cecile H. Weintraub Barbara Ann Korte MacArthur Class of 1964 Paulette Browne Steve and Elizabeth Pyle Grant Vaught Thomas and Colleen Vaughn Jim Sober Judy Waldrop Susan Miller Gary Upp William O. Bass Deborah Cargill Michael Hagen Norma J. Graves Susan Bell Mature Markets, Inc.	In Memory of Mildred McAdam Karla and Joe McAdam Don and Sylvia McAdam Annette M. Roberts Paul and Verlyn Rosenberger	In Memory of Tamara Rushton Brenda and Patrick Clark Kris Conley Julie Hudson Trisha and Chad Isaac Michael and Linda Martin Kay and Bruce Mason Tena and Gregory Matas Suzanne and Alan Morr Robert Rushton Ann and Edmond Sawyer
In Honor of Donald A. Jones Jean Jones	In Honor of Joshua Fazekas and South Shores Chess Doug Warren	In Honor of Mike Elben C.W. (Charlie) and Mary Smith	In Memory of David Kirtley Wilson Barb and Richard Hazelrigg	In Memory of Eloise Ivens Sears Ellen Hearn	In Memory of Loren “Doug” Hagen Ayn Owens Dianne Devore Wally Miller Gary Murfin Bill and Deanna Bohnsack Rose Ann (Elzy) Elston Viron Moore Fran Peterson Cecile H. Weintraub Barbara Ann Korte MacArthur Class of 1964 Paulette Browne Steve and Elizabeth Pyle Grant Vaught Thomas and Colleen Vaughn Jim Sober Judy Waldrop Susan Miller Gary Upp William O. Bass Deborah Cargill Michael Hagen Norma J. Graves Susan Bell Mature Markets, Inc.	In Memory of Mildred McAdam Karla and Joe McAdam Don and Sylvia McAdam Annette M. Roberts Paul and Verlyn Rosenberger	In Memory of Tamara Rushton Brenda and Patrick Clark Kris Conley Julie Hudson Trisha and Chad Isaac Michael and Linda Martin Kay and Bruce Mason Tena and Gregory Matas Suzanne and Alan Morr Robert Rushton Ann and Edmond Sawyer
In Honor of Dr. Lee Endsley Denny Mahorney	In Honor of Judith Karloski Morville Dawn Johnson	In Honor of Ms. Trump-Jones Melanie Brown	In Memory of David Kirtley Wilson Barb and Richard Hazelrigg	In Memory of Eloise Ivens Sears Ellen Hearn	In Memory of Loren “Doug” Hagen Ayn Owens Dianne Devore Wally Miller Gary Murfin Bill and Deanna Bohnsack Rose Ann (Elzy) Elston Viron Moore Fran Peterson Cecile H. Weintraub Barbara Ann Korte MacArthur Class of 1964 Paulette Browne Steve and Elizabeth Pyle Grant Vaught Thomas and Colleen Vaughn Jim Sober Judy Waldrop Susan Miller Gary Upp William O. Bass Deborah Cargill Michael Hagen Norma J. Graves Susan Bell Mature Markets, Inc.	In Memory of Mildred McAdam Karla and Joe McAdam Don and Sylvia McAdam Annette M. Roberts Paul and Verlyn Rosenberger	In Memory of Tamara Rushton Brenda and Patrick Clark Kris Conley Julie Hudson Trisha and Chad Isaac Michael and Linda Martin Kay and Bruce Mason Tena and Gregory Matas Suzanne and Alan Morr Robert Rushton Ann and Edmond Sawyer
In Honor of Dr. Lisa R. Trump Debby Trump	In Honor of Larry Altenbaumer Summit Utilities (Littleton, CO)	In Honor of Mike Elben C.W. (Charlie) and Mary Smith	In Memory of David Kirtley Wilson Barb and Richard Hazelrigg	In Memory of Eloise Ivens Sears Ellen Hearn	In Memory of Loren “Doug” Hagen Ayn Owens Dianne Devore Wally Miller Gary Murfin Bill and Deanna Bohnsack Rose Ann (Elzy) Elston Viron Moore Fran Peterson Cecile H. Weintraub Barbara Ann Korte MacArthur Class of 1964 Paulette Browne Steve and Elizabeth Pyle Grant Vaught Thomas and Colleen Vaughn Jim Sober Judy Waldrop Susan Miller Gary Upp William O. Bass Deborah Cargill Michael Hagen Norma J. Graves Susan Bell Mature Markets, Inc.	In Memory of Mildred McAdam Karla and Joe McAdam Don and Sylvia McAdam Annette M. Roberts Paul and Verlyn Rosenberger	In Memory of Tamara Rushton Brenda and Patrick Clark Kris Conley Julie Hudson Trisha and Chad Isaac Michael and Linda Martin Kay and Bruce Mason Tena and Gregory Matas Suzanne and Alan Morr Robert Rushton Ann and Edmond Sawyer
In Honor of Eisenhower Class of 1963 Phil and Carol Hazenfield	In Honor of LaVonne Chaney Alpha Delta Kappa Gamma	In Honor of Ms. Trump-Jones Melanie Brown	In Memory of David Kirtley Wilson Barb and Richard Hazelrigg	In Memory of Eloise Ivens Sears Ellen Hearn	In Memory of Loren “Doug” Hagen Ayn Owens Dianne Devore Wally Miller Gary Murfin Bill and Deanna Bohnsack Rose Ann (Elzy) Elston Viron Moore Fran Peterson Cecile H. Weintraub Barbara Ann Korte MacArthur Class of 1964 Paulette Browne Steve and Elizabeth Pyle Grant Vaught Thomas and Colleen Vaughn Jim Sober Judy Waldrop Susan Miller Gary Upp William O. Bass Deborah Cargill Michael Hagen Norma J. Graves Susan Bell Mature Markets, Inc.	In Memory of Mildred McAdam Karla and Joe McAdam Don and Sylvia McAdam Annette M. Roberts Paul and Verlyn Rosenberger	In Memory of Tamara Rushton Brenda and Patrick Clark Kris Conley Julie Hudson Trisha and Chad Isaac Michael and Linda Martin Kay and Bruce Mason Tena and Gregory Matas Suzanne and Alan Morr Robert Rushton Ann and Edmond Sawyer



LUCY & BOB SMITH

The success of any ambitious philanthropic venture is dependent on the long-term commitment of private funders. These donors share the mission's perspective, connect with its values and rally fellow partners to the cause. Decatur is a better place because of them. And few community members are as comprehensively supportive of Decatur educational initiatives as Lucy and Bob.

The Smiths invest in programs that benefit kids from the earliest ages through enrollment at Millikin University and Richland Community College. This broad range of impact represents a consistent, encouraging presence that exemplifies the Foundation's mission to enhance, enrich and encourage creative learning opportunities.

Lucy served as a two-term (six year) Foundation Trustee, providing her voice on the Grant Committee to review teacher project proposals each month, and currently as Trustee Emerita.

"There is nothing more important to our future than engaging students as active learners," Lucy observes. "We have to reach them when they're young. It's vital to spark their curiosity and identify areas that interest them."

“There is nothing more important to our future than engaging students as active learners.”

This can be as straightforward as approving a grant to purchase “Versa-tile” Math materials, which Lucy cites as a project she enjoyed reviewing. “It’s a simple thing, but can have such an interesting impact.”

Lucy’s family has long supported a diversity of activities. Her parents assisted to create Richland’s Kitty Lindsay Learning Resources Center, named for Lucy’s late sister, a beloved DPS elementary teacher and principal. Lucy and Bob believe in broadening horizons for students to gain a perspective on the world at large, evidenced by their contribution to sponsor a visit from presidential historian Michael Beschloss to Millikin University, providing a chance for Eisenhower and MacArthur students to gain a first-hand feel for conversations at the collegiate level.

Investing in Foundation initiatives is far from the only impact Lucy and Bob have on their community. Witness their commitment to career-development activities at the Women’s Correctional Facility. Ultimately, even this ties to their overarching perspective on impacting the future.

“We need to develop community members who contribute to the health of the city as a whole,” Lucy says. “That means starting at an early age, and encouraging students to discover opportunities for jobs as they grow up and graduate.”





OPERATIONAL EXPENSES

Over the past eight years, operational costs (staffing, marketing, fundraising expenses, office expenses, annual audit and professional fees, etc.) have totaled \$1,104,853 in sum as of November 2020. This represents an average of **\$122,761** per year to maintain Foundation activities.

TOTAL GIFTS TO FUND

OPERATIONS AND OVERHEAD

\$1,104,853

(12% OF TOTAL REVENUE)

TOTAL GIFTS TO FUND

GRANTS AND ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS

\$8,296,341

(88% OF TOTAL REVENUE)

Continued growth of the **Madden Fund for Decatur Public Schools** will eventually cover annual operational costs in full. Endowed funds sit currently at \$685,884, with a target of \$3.5 million.

SPECIAL THANK YOU

The staff and Trustees of the Decatur Public Schools Foundation extend best wishes for a relaxing retirement to **Kay Geskey**, Coordinator of Budgets and Accounting for District 61. Over the past eight years, her guidance and expertise have proven invaluable as the Foundation's programming continues to evolve and grow more complex.

Kay's extensive experience – and patient explanations – have meant a world of difference to keep operations running smoothly. She will be greatly missed. (But we know she'll be enjoying the extra family pool time...) The Foundation is so pleased that **Lisa Jones** has stepped in to carry the torch!

DPS 61 EMPLOYEE GIVING

The Decatur Public Schools Foundation exists to support students and teachers at every grade level. We are grateful to see enthusiasm for the Foundation reflected by high levels of participation at each building for the employee giving campaign. Funds generated through payroll deduction contributions are classed as undesignated gifts, and utilized to underwrite operational and organizational expenses required to provide our grants and manage special programs. The personal investment from teachers and administrators equals \$208,578 over the past eight academic years – an average of \$26,072 per year to support the Foundation.

THANK YOU, District 61 friends and colleagues!



THE MADDEN FUND

For Decatur Public Schools

“It is just vital
to support our
young people.
We have to
cheer for them!”

- Peggy Madden

In December 2019, Decatur lost a loved one who will never be replaced. Peggy Madden’s charm, keen discernment, and unflappable disposition defined a person who met every obstacle head-on. One never had to wonder what she was thinking, and her observations typically cut right to the chase.

Though small in stature, Peggy provided a towering influence. Her presence meant the world to sustaining worthy community causes. As an original Foundation Trustee, she understood the organization’s mission from the outset, helping define its long-term objectives and create a blueprint to build them.

“It is just vital to support our young people,” Peggy said. “We have to cheer for them!”

She supported all manner of creative ventures and had a special affinity for the Arts. A lifelong proponent of public education, she earned her teaching degree from the University of Illinois in 1950. She was fiercely proud of her family and their achievements, stories that started in District 61.

Granddaughter Natalie (Betscher) Orne is a MacArthur graduate and Vice President / Director of Business Development for CORE Construction. One of CORE’s prominent clients is Millikin University, where the company recently oversaw construction of the new Center for Theatre and Dance. Peggy expressed great satisfaction as Natalie welcomed guests to the Foundation’s *Legacy of Learning* banquet

at Millikin in 2018, sharing an evening with family to celebrate our organization at an institution that also meant so much to her. At the time of her passing, Peggy still served as an active university Trustee.

For nearly 90 years, Peggy lit up every room she entered. Nothing could compare to earning her approval; when she gave you the nod, you knew for sure you were doing something right.

Her presence as a philanthropist means Peggy’s legacy will always remain apparent. Her family name on the Madden Arts Center expresses her devotion to Decatur in a fitting and lasting manner. Likewise, we are honored that Peggy shared her surname – synonymous with generosity – as we grow the Foundation’s endowment to a sustaining level.

Peggy’s energy, smile, and lively spirit were greater gifts, even, than her frequent financial support. (Though we remain thankful of all four.) With genuine affection, our Trustees and staff offer their gratitude and fond remembrance.

Her family believes “I had a ball!” is how she would have summarized her joyful life. We did too, Peggy.



Planned Giving

Foundation funds have been ably managed by Benjamin F. Edwards since the establishment of our first investment accounts.

The Community Foundation of Macon County is also a frequent partner in underwriting educational initiatives, and numerous contributors to the Decatur Public Schools Foundation provide funds through their existing Community Foundation accounts.

More recently, our Executive Committee has established relationships with Raymond James Associates and Stifel. Donors to the Madden Fund for Decatur Public Schools

contribute on a one-time, multiple-year or estate-planning basis, and can also designate that gifts be managed by existing financial advisors with whom they have an established relationship.

If you wish to make a gift or re-shape your estate plan, please contact the DPS Foundation office at (217) 362-3042 to maximize your tax benefits and the lasting impact of your dollars on public education.

Madden Fund objective: The campaign’s purpose is to develop combined Endowment and Investment Funds to a sustaining level, while also generating operating funds for years when corporate or private giving prove less robust.

\$3.5M REVENUE
GOAL

The campaign seeks to cultivate a \$3.5 million endowment.

Strategic Value

Foundation activities will remain fully-funded even in down years for fundraising; annual operational costs will be drawn down an average 4% per year from invested funds, freeing additional annually-generated revenue for District 61 grants and projects.

Organizational Significance

The range and impact of activities will continually expand; the Foundation will remain permanently solvent even within an uncertain financial climate. Donors will be assured that fixed operating capital is in place no matter what fundraising challenges may arise in a given period.

CURRENT CAMPAIGN FINANCIALS

OPERATIONAL ENDOWMENT	\$364,346
PROGRAMMING INVESTMENTS	\$321,537
MADDEN FUND TOTAL TO DATE	\$685,884



DWAYNE O. ANDREAS AG ACADEMY

In December of 2017, the **Howard G. Buffett Foundation (HGBF)** provided a gift of more than \$1.65 million to establish agricultural education programming in both Decatur Public High Schools.

A strategic S.W.AG (Starts With Ag) marketing campaign managed by the **Neuhoff Media Group** yielded capacity enrollment of 202 students for Year 1 of program activities.

Agriculture educators **Ashley Austin** (Eisenhower High School) and **Andrew Klein** (MacArthur High School) assumed duties in August of 2018.

Named for late agribusiness pioneer and **ADM President/CEO Dwayne Andreas**, the academy focuses on career exploration and hands-on learning for what has grown to an enrollment of 361 students in the most recent academic cycle.

Only 2% of agriculture-related jobs worldwide directly involve farming. The academy's prime objective is introducing urban students to the other 98%, represented by abundant employment options such as engineering, welding, commodity trading, sales, marketing and food science, each of which are prevalent in Central Illinois and elsewhere in the state. The production of food, fuel and fiber is vital to the health of the region as it supports the global food supplies and economics.

ACADEMY STUDENTS ENGAGE IN THE NATIONAL FFA ORGANIZATION'S "THREE CIRCLES" MODEL, COMPRISED OF:

- Academic coursework in agriscience and agribusiness, ag mechanics, animal science and horticulture
- Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAE's, such as internships or work on the Andreas Academy's Living Science Farm)
- Career Development Events (CDE's, such as public speaking or entrepreneurial ventures)

Howard G. Buffett,

Chairman and CEO of the Howard G. Buffett Foundation, notes that the intent of the program is to get students excited about agribusiness.

"We have to engage more young people to pursue opportunities in agriculture if we want the United States to continue to be a leader in global food security,"

Howard says. He also notes that the Academy's namesake, Dwayne Andreas, was "a true pioneer who helped make the U.S. a global leader in agribusiness; we hope this Academy inspires the next generation of leaders to build on his legacy."



Mayor Julie Moore Wolfe shares this

sentiment. "You wonder maybe if you're a kid in high school, 'What does that mean if I'm not a farmer?' Well, our companies right here in Decatur, Illinois feed the rest of the world," the mayor says. "We should all take a great deal of pride in that, but you don't have to be a farmer to be part of the global importance of our agribusiness companies."

Beyond exploring career fields and growing into more informed consumers, Andreas Academy students improve soft skills while developing leadership capabilities that will serve them well no matter what career choices they ultimately make.

Nicole Bateman, President of the Economic Development Corporation of Decatur and Macon County,

feels that strategic investments in our high school talent pool will maximize the community's ability to maintain a stable source of employees. From blue-collar to the board room, we seek to "grow our own."

"The Decatur Public Schools by nature are our largest producer of workforce," she says. "And so the opportunity to train a workforce while they're still in high school gives our local employers an opportunity to bring in really skilled, talented individuals, either right into a job or recruiting them back after they've been away to college."

An FFA alumna who grew up on a dairy farm, Nicole has a first-hand awareness of the organization's effectiveness, and played a key role in design work for the Andreas Academy.

Neuhoff Media Vice President of Business Development Brian Byers

has long advocated for the creation of agriculture-focused programming in Decatur's public schools. An Eisenhower High School alum, he wondered why a school district situated in our agribusiness region has never established a program prior to now.

"It never made any sense to me," Brian says. "We'd be out at the Farm Progress Show and all these busses from all over the state would pull in, and we'd never see any District 61 kids. I'd say how can that be? There are all these careers in all kinds of agriculture-connected fields, and our students weren't even aware they exist."

A frequent collaborator and organizer for HGBF initiatives, Brian also served two terms as a Foundation Board Trustee. He credits current school district administrators for their willingness to buy into the importance of agriculture education.

The Decatur Public Schools Board of Education and Superintendent Paul Fregeau

enthusiastically embraced the idea when approached with the prospect of sending students to the 2017 Farm Progress Show. More than 700 middle-school students attended the show that year, with a similar number of new students sponsored by the HGBF attending in August 2019.

“Seeing these kids get excited about the large equipment is like watching them go to the moon,” Brian says. “It’s completely foreign to them, and it’s an eye-opener for so many. We try to convey that every large tractor represents a job for an engineer, a salesperson, a welder, a mechanic. There are so many opportunities for them that we have to introduce at an early age.”

Off-Campus Engagement

New teachers **Seth McMillan** and **Kacey Reinholtz** have expanded learning opportunities for horticulture and animal science. Students have engaged in dozens of enrichment activities during the first two years of the Academy’s existence, with academic work meeting freshman seminar requirements and providing the opportunity to earn Honors credit. Yet it’s what happens outside the classroom that can prove the most meaningful.

A highlight for members has been establishing the Academy’s **Living Science Farm**. This facility remains in continual development, incorporating test plots and vegetable plantings for consumption, along with a timber-frame livestock and event barn and substantial poultry facilities. In order to house small animal projects at the farm, students actively engaged in civic government by successfully lobbying for a city zoning amendment approved by Decatur’s City Council.

One tremendous benefit to farm activities has been the fact that students can work in small groups in a safe, socially-distant manner in compliance with COVID-19 restrictions on group activities. Enabling Academy members to continue work on individual projects kept them in better communication with classmates and teachers than they would have been without the farm.

Produce during Year 1 went to local food banks. Summer 2020 featured a **Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)** market offering Andreas Academy eggs produced by pasture-ranging hens, broiler chickens, and vegetables ranging from sweetcorn to potatoes, tomatoes and pumpkins. Supporters could also purchase hanging baskets, floral bouquets and mums grown in the Eisenhower greenhouse.

Academy students have shown their foundation ewes to good success, and anticipate eight lambs in Spring 2021. A brace of milking goats expect kids. Students plan to show their two Hereford steers (one sponsored by the **Erv and Linda Arends Fund**) throughout spring and summer, then will offer Andreas Academy steaks and ground beef beginning next fall.

Funds generated through Living Science Farm pursuits are placed in an Ag Activities savings account with the Foundation. At the conclusion of the HGBF grant cycle in 2022, these funds will sustain the farm and support FFA activities.

Many students taking on farm responsibilities – and engaging with the Academy in general – have never been exposed to agriculture as a concept or career path.

“This program has genuinely changed my life,”

says **Marie Shaffer**, who served as President of the MacArthur FFA chapter and now studies plant biotechnology at the University of Illinois, with related interests in Agroecology and Ag Business. Her enrollment in the College of ACES (Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences) is a direct result of her participation in the Academy.

“I can't express how grateful I am to have had this experience,” Marie says. “Agriculture is such a major industry in the world and Decatur, so I'm shocked that this program hadn't started sooner. There have been so many opportunities presented to me through the Andreas Academy, and I can't wait to see where else agriculture takes me. Thanks to FFA and Mr. Klein, I've found an amazing community that I want to be a part of in my future. All I can say is Thank You! I'm so blessed to have been in school when this started. I'm excited to see all that it grows into.”

Marie managed the Living Science Farm operation last summer, and has worked to establish a new registered student organization on the U. of I. campus; her **Urban Ag Alliance** concept seeks to connect students from non-agrarian backgrounds to the hundreds of diverse careers offered by agriculture.



ILLINOIS College of Agricultural, Consumer & Environmental Sciences

Dr. Kim Kidwell,

Dean of the College of ACES, is a respected scholar of plant breeding and genetics, and points out that opportunities like this don’t exist everywhere for high school students.

“This is really unique,” she says. “You have a chance to actually lean in and figure out how you can make a difference in the world through your education... I always tell students to explore the opportunities and the possibilities. See if it feels good to you, then pursue that career pathway. Because you want to love what you do.”

Marie and her fellow officers also have a leg up on performance learning, such as their work to host the Foundation’s 18th annual *Legacy of Learning* banquet in November. Their team welcomed guests to Millikin University to introduce Outstanding Educator Susie Niesman and provide an overview of Academy development. This active leadership exemplifies the manner in which students have taken ownership of the program.

The Academy is pleased to congratulate founding MacArthur instructor Andrew Klein for his selection by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) as Principal Consultant for Agricultural Education. This position has a great deal of influence on the direction of Ag instruction across the state. Andrew’s experience in establishing a successful agriculture program in an urban school district made him a unique candidate for the job. ISBE and Illinois FFA leadership have placed an increasing emphasis on the inclusion of non-traditional students, particularly minorities, to engage with the agriculture industry. Andrew is well-qualified to lead this effort. The Andreas Academy and District 61 look forward to following his work and its impact on Illinois students from diverse backgrounds!

Andreas Academy Support Network

The success of the agriculture education program is a result of supporters from all over the community and school district pitching in to make it happen.



A prominent example is work put in by District 61 Buildings, Grounds and Maintenance crews.

The guys provided considerable time and expertise to – among other tasks large and small – lay the foundation and pour concrete for our event and livestock barn; run the water line; excavate and pack the access road; grade the building site; and install electric at the building. The crews saved the Foundation approximately \$20,000 for the program on this barn project, and another \$40,000 by constructing the Eisenhower Greenhouse from the ground up, including utilities.

The union has promoted the Academy’s growth from the outset, encouraging students and facilitating construction of the Mennonite-built barn.

“I think the Ag program is phenomenal,” says **Scott Tapscott**, a 26-year electrical specialist at District 61. He and partner **Floyd Bolt** installed hardware and wiring. “It’s fun to be involved in projects like this, and to see the benefit the kids get out of it. We’ve enjoyed working on that barn more than anything we’ve ever done.”

15-year maintenance man **Scott Johnson** says much the same. Chief Union Steward for SEIU Local 73, he spent a lot of hours on the skid steer preparing the construction site.



“It’s great to see it develop,” he says. “We all work for the students, and this is an opportunity for them to explore things they’ve never had a chance to see.”

Countless other examples demonstrate the willingness of the crews to support the program: **Roger Torbert’s** work on the bulldozer and drainage systems; **Josh Ray’s** experienced hand at beekeeping; **Ryan Atwater’s** maintenance of the Science Farm John Deere; **Tim Slempp’s** and **Jim Baitty’s** plumbing and water work. Director of Buildings and Grounds **Steve Kline** and Assistant Director **Phil Tapscott** are frequent visitors to check on farm activities, and Maintenance Foreman **Dan Hainline** traveled to the Chicago High School for Ag Sciences to take notes on their program.

Without such willing collaborators, programs like this never get off the ground. It’s remarkable to track the growing number friends and businesses providing time, talent and insight to assist. As new needs arise, partners have stepped in to meet the need every step of the way.

Original plans incorporated less of a livestock component. When the students steered the program that direction, the Academy needed a truck for hauling hay, equipment and trailers. Enter **Steve** and **Drew Gensler**, the father and son at **Bob Brady Auto Group** who organized a new Dodge Ram at no cost to the Academy. An Ag-Certified dealer, Steve appreciates the Academy’s approach to steering kids towards careers.

“It means a lot,” Steve says. “You never know where life is going to take you. I started here when I was 15 years old, went into military service, came back and have been blessed to work my way up and enjoy a great career here. There are so many jobs out there for kids as they start out in life. Look at what we do – we always need mechanics, and so do the big ag dealers looking for people to work on heavy equipment. Being in an agriculture program teaches the value of hard work and developing discipline. These kids will gain skills that help them all through life.”

The Genslers have been personally supportive, as well, loaning the FFA students the use of their family rack wagon to host fall hay rides at the Living Science Farm. Their interest and engagement mirrors the support provided by the community to ensure that enrollment in the Andreas Academy is a memorable experience for students.

Interested community members can visit virtually at www.itstartswithag.com to learn more about how the Dwayne O. Andreas Ag Academy is providing students in Decatur with opportunities they would never have without privately-funded enrichment programming.

THE FOLLOWING FRIENDS HAVE SUPPORTED THE PROGRAM’S DEVELOPMENT AS IT GETS OFF THE GROUND:

Agricultural Watershed Institute, Archer Daniels Midland, Akorn Inc., the Andreas Family, Bodine Electric, Brush College Animal Hospital, Caterpillar, the City of Decatur, Decatur Boys and Girls Club, Decatur Pipe and Steamfitters, Decatur Industrial Electric, DPS 61 Board of Education, Economic Development Corporation, EPL Bio Analytical, Facilitating Communication in Ag Education, Farm Progress Show, From the Ground Up, Grain Journal, the Great Pumpkin Patch, Greater Decatur Black Chamber, Heartland Tech Academy, IBEW 146, Illinois FFA Center, Limitless Decatur and Macon County, Macon County Conservation District, Macon County Farm Bureau, McLeod Express, Midwest Inland Port, Millikin University Tabor School of Business, Neuhoﬀ Media, Norfolk Southern Corporation, Parke Warehouses, Regional Office of Education, Richland Community College, Robertson Charter School, Scott State Bank, Sloan John Deere, Tate & Lyle, University of Illinois College of ACES, Van Horn Inc., WAND Ag News, WCIA, Wells Fargo Advisors – and the MANY thoughtful individuals who have reached out with oﬀers to assist in this ambitious venture!

MEET STUDENTS AND CREATURES AT THE ACADEMY VIA:

facebook.com/LivingScienceFarm

Funding for the Academy’s four-year pilot is allocated through the end of the 2021-2022 academic year. The DPS Foundation is developing relationships with Decatur-area farming partners to endow acreage that provides funding for Academy activities moving forward past the pilot period. Please contact Zach directly to discuss opportunities to partner on this effort. He can be reached via (217) 362-3042.

DWAYNE O. ANDREAS AG ACADEMY A SPECIAL THANK YOU



Bob Brady Auto Group – Official Truck Sponsor of the Dwayne O. Andreas Ag Academy



Facilitating Communication in Ag Education (FCAE)

Thank You to Megan Coy and her colleagues for your invaluable assistance in designing our program!

Thank you also to Principal Robert Aranda and his faculty at Bryan High School (Omaha, Nebraska) and to our friends at the Chicago High School for Ag Sciences for your assistance – both hosting us and visiting – as we conceived the Academy.



Neuhoﬀ Media, Brian Byers and Nick Smith

for your effective concept and management of the S.W.AG (Starts With Ag) campaign! Without that coordinated effort, the program would never have gathered such early momentum.

Visit the Academy at itstartswithag.com

OTHER INDIVIDUALS LENDING THEIR VOICES TO PROVIDE PRACTICAL GUIDANCE

Community Advisory Committee

Rob Albers
Macon County Farm Bureau
Larry Altenbaumer
Retired – Ameren Illinois, Economic Development Corp.
Mark Avery
Grain Journal
Nicole Bateman
Economic Development Corporation – President
Dr. Najiba Benabess
Millikin University – Dean, Tabor School of Business
Adam Brown
Macon County Farm Bureau Board
David Brown
WAND Ag News
Mindy Bunselmeyer
Illinois FFA Center – President
Brian Byers
Neuhoﬀ Media – Vice President of Development
Tom Courson
Busey Ag Services – Senior Vice President

Megan Coy
Facilitating Communication in Ag Education
Niki Fenderson
Robertson Charter School – Principal
Tamarra Fuller
Greater Decatur Black Chamber - President
Steve Gensler
Bob Brady Auto Mall – Vice President
Ashley Grayned
DPS 61 – Director of Innovative Programs
Mark Greenawalt
Decatur Pipe and Steamfitters
Dr. Greg Haarman
Field Production Sponsor
Ed Harris
Van Horn Inc.
Ty Hildum
Norfolk Southern Corporation
Bret Hitchings
Heartland Tech Academy – Principal

Kim Hurm
ADM – Innovation and Commercialization Director
Cordell Ingram
MacArthur High School – Principal
Steve John
Agricultural Watershed Institute – Executive Director
Matt Jungmann
Farm Progress – Director, Trade Shows
Dr. Kim Kidwell
University of Illinois – Dean, College of ACES
Robin King
EPL Bio Analytical
Jarrod Krall
Krall Custom Baling
Dr. Amy Leman
University of Illinois – College of ACES
Paul Marien
Macon County Conservation District
Ann Mathieson
Enterprise Montessori – Principal

Colt McLeod
McLeod Express – Executive Vice President
Kevin McSherry
From the Ground Up
Julie Moore Wolfe
Mayor – City of Decatur
Chris Phelps
Scott State Bank – Ag Lending Manager
Dave Rathje
Bodine Electric – Kelly Construction
Dr. Dave Rosch
University of Illinois – College of ACES
Josh Sapp
IBEW 146
Jim Schroeder
First Illinois Ag Group – Senior Vice President
Mark Schweitzer
ADM – Vice President – Investor Relations
Jeff Sloan
Sloan Implement

Pam Smith
DTN/Progressive Farmer
Jess Smithers
Richland Community College – Director of Agricultural Programs
Matt Snyder
Regional Office of Education – Superintendent
Gavin Stoddard
Parke Warehouses
Trent Thompson
Decatur Industrial Electric
Dr. Cris Valdez
Richland Community College – President
Dr. Bill Van Alstine
Brush College Animal Hospital
Jennifer Walker
Tate & Lyle Brand Manager – Community Affairs
Greg Webb
ADM – Vice President – State Government Relations
Dr. Amy Zahm
Eisenhower High School – Principal



HOWARD G. BUFFETT FOUNDATION PROGRAMMING

The Decatur Public Schools have benefited immensely from investments made by the **Howard G. Buffett Foundation (HGBF)** to support enrichment programs across District 61. For more than a decade, Howard's belief in our kids has been unwavering and spanned a wide variety of activities that engage students at every grade level.

In addition to a significant investment in the **Dwayne O. Andreas Ag Academy**, the HGBF has provided much-appreciated support for the following initiatives:

- » **CREATIVE SCIENCE INVESTIGATIONS (CSI)**
- » **DURFEE ELEMENTARY PLAYGROUND RENOVATION**
- » **FARM PROGRESS SHOW STUDENT VISITS (2017 AND 2019)**
- » **HARRIS AND HOPE ACADEMY FAMILY THANKSGIVINGS**
- » **MONTESSORI OUTDOOR PLAYSPACE DEVELOPMENT**
- » **PARENT LEADERSHIP TRAINING INSTITUTE (PLTI)**
- » **SOUTH SHORES MUSIC PROGRAMMING**

THE HOWARD G.
BUFFETT
FOUNDATION

**THE JERRY. J. DAWSON CIVIC
LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE LAUNCHES
ACTIVITIES IN SPRING SEMESTER 2021**

Our DPS students, faculty and Foundation **THANK** Howard sincerely for his ongoing confidence!



JERRY J. DAWSON CIVIC LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

“Civics” as a term encompasses the things people do that affect fellow citizens. Civic education entails the theory and practice of citizenship, including the rights and responsibilities for members of a society.

In January 2020, a **Howard G. Buffett Foundation** gift of **\$2.48 million** funded the creation of an eight-year project to promote deeper civic engagement. The **Jerry J. Dawson Civic Leadership Institute** (DCLI) seeks to ensure that students develop a deeper understanding of how democracy functions and how to contribute their talents to impact their community.

Helping young people process what’s happening around them is a core facet of equipping them for independence. Establishing the Institute during the most challenging year in recent memory lends added resonance.

“Many of us have never seen or experienced a time like this,” says DCLI Coordinator **Dr. Juanita Morris**, who oversees all aspects of the program’s design and management. “Both our national and local communities are facing obstacles and injustices in a space that is new for many of us. We’re dealing with natural disasters, civic and social unrest, an uncertain economy, all within the midst of a global pandemic.”

A primary program component is encouraging students to pursue careers in fields that serve the needs specific to our community. In Year 1 of programming, these careers are represented through three pillars:

PILLAR I:

Law Enforcement
and Social Justice

PILLAR II:

Healthcare

PILLAR III:

Politics and
Local Governance

“These are completely separate fields, conceptually,” says Dr. Morris. “But at this moment in history, law enforcement, healthcare and politics have become inextricably intertwined. Each day they continue to draw closer and closer to one another.”

DCLI students who engage fully are eligible for **Richland Community College** scholarships to cover the cost of an associate’s degree in these career areas, including nursing, paramedic support, firefighting and legal professions. In Year 2, related pillars in Social Entrepreneurship and Education will introduce additional paths to serving the public good.

The Institute is the namesake of retired **Sheriff Jerry Dawson**, whose thoughtful nature and approach to service left a positive imprint on local law enforcement during his 30-year career. Following retirement in 2008, Sheriff Dawson served as an Adjunct Instructor of Criminal Justice at the former Decatur Area Technical Academy and Richland Community College. His personal sense of investment in the community informed his eight years as a City Councilman, where he approached decision-making with an eye on what treats all citizens most fairly.

“Early in my career I worked directly with a number of young people who made mistakes,” Jerry says. “Those interactions opened my eyes to the support kids need to make good choices as they mature. Later I looked back on that experience and really tried to get to the root of things and understand where our challenges are. In Decatur we are blessed with resources to explore new ways of addressing these challenges. We’re fortunate to have community members invested in creating an environment that helps students grow into positive, productive citizens.”



DCLI enrichment activities in development will target students at **Eisenhower High School** and **MacArthur High School**, as well as engaging kids at the lower grade levels feeding into upper grades, particularly through the Public Service Academy at **Stephen Decatur Middle School** and initiatives such as a Civics Club forming at **Hope Academy**.

An early example of DCLI programming is the creation of a **non-partisan information portal** geared to helping the community make informed decisions within the electoral process. This site – www.flexmyvote.com – pulls together resources to inform young citizens about the voting process, introduce them to candidates of all political affiliations, highlight what positions are elected and how local elections impact our lives, and learn how to actively participate in shaping governance. With local elections slated for spring 2021, DCLI anticipates direct involvement from students who perform candidate interviews to create video content throughout the campaign process.

A focus on personal values prods students to think about how their decisions affect their own lives as well as those of others. The Institute design emphasizes the importance of personal voices to public conversation on topics that impact all of us, then encouraging active steps to be involved in a thoughtful way.

“Communities are strongest when the broadest cross-section of citizens are engaged and work together to improve the quality of life for everybody,” says Howard Buffett. “We believe the Jerry J. Dawson Civic Leadership Institute will give Decatur’s young people opportunities to see how they can pursue careers that allow them to engage, support and be the future leaders working to improve their community.”

Development includes collaboration with community partners such as Crossing Healthcare, the Decatur City Council, Decatur Police Department, Decatur Memorial and St. Mary’s Hospitals, Heartland Technical Academy, the Macon County Board, Macon County Circuit Court, Macon County Sheriff’s Office, Macon County State’s Attorney Office, Richland Community College, Millikin University, Workforce Investment Solutions and state and local lawmakers. Each of these entities and other new partners will underscore opportunities to discover how decisions made at a young age impact life thereafter.

The DPS Foundation will continue to update our stakeholders on creative DCLI developments, and to document the impact of this unique approach to engaging students.

PLEASE VISIT THE INSTITUTE ONLINE AT: CivicLeadership101.com



Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) has provided tremendous contributions throughout the Foundation's 23-year existence.

Over this span, the company has invested heavily in creative projects in every District 61 building. These have included STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) and general academic enrichment; funding for Operation Calculus staff; Earth Day events, and, most recently, the creation of an Excursion Fund to cover costs for student experiences beyond the classroom.

Since 2012, enrichment-project contributions to the Foundation have totaled \$377,170 (with an additional \$463,603 of support for direct-service programs provided straight to District 61). Of this funding for enrichment grants and special events, \$17,531 matched ADM employee gifts to the Foundation. In sum, the company has contributed \$840,773 to support students in the Decatur Public Schools in the past eight academic years, an investment of about \$105,000 annually.

"ADM is proud to partner with the Decatur Public Schools Foundation to advance agricultural and STEM education for future leaders in the Decatur community," says Jennifer Ballinger of ADM Cares and Corporate Communications. "By providing support for 4-H, FFA and STEM education, we are helping educate tomorrow's workforce for the agricultural industry, and all industrial sectors."



Kim Hurm,

a Director of Innovation and Commercialization for ADM, currently serves as a Foundation Trustee, and also assists the Grant Review Committee with its assessments. Tom Binder (formerly of ADM Research) and Dr. Todd Werpy (Senior Vice President and Chief Science Officer) have also served on the Foundation Board in recent years. Vice President of State Government Relations Greg Webb has provided invaluable guidance and encouragement as the Dwayne O. Andreas Ag Academy grew from the seed of an idea to a fully-emerged program, and remains actively engaged with students.

"As a proud graduate of the Decatur Public Schools," Kim says, "starting at Enterprise Elementary and ending at MacArthur High School, I was fortunate to be mentored by many wonderful teachers who provided me a strong educational foundation and vision for what my future could hold. Now, as a Foundation Trustee, I am motivated to make sure those same opportunities are afforded to Decatur's youth today."

FOCUS ON

STEM & AGRICULTURE

A strong thematic tie-in exists with the Dwayne O. Andreas Ag Academy.

ADM-sponsored programming in 4-H and experiential science activities helps to create a logical path for elementary and middle-school students to follow for eventual enrollment in the Academy.

Teachers at elementary and middle-school grade levels select curriculum from 4-H program guides to align with science and agricultural subject areas. Following is an example of in-class instructional content provided through the University of Illinois Extension Office:

Horticulture Students will use the 4-H Horticulture curriculum to explore gardening. To utilize the winter months, classrooms will use Earth Boxes and grow lights used for indoor growing. The grow lights will also be used to start plants from seed that can transfer outside the spring. The University of Illinois Master Gardeners will provide technical assistance in choosing plants to grow and troubleshooting growing problems during the year. Short growing season plants will allow for multiple growing periods. Curriculum: Horticulture Leader Guide and Youth Project Book Supplies: Earth Box and grow light, seeds, fertilizer, and soil. Other assistance provided upon request.



Teacher-Designed 4-H Programming

Teachers are empowered to adapt elements of existing curriculum for individual plans that suit the particular needs of their students and buildings. An example is how Stephen Decatur Middle School Science teacher, Kate Prine, embeds 4-H curriculum into each of her classes.

Her design ties especially well to horticulture, but also to embryology and animal science topics. In preparing for the year she visited the Chicago High School for Ag Sciences independently over spring break), and took professional development courses on landscaping for bees, fruit trees (vines and shrubs) and annuals/perennials/conifers of Illinois (these classes are provided at Prairie Gardens in Champaign).

This teacher's 4-H and related science activities are providing content for her doctoral work, incorporating both current best practices and her own research. She has renovated an existing greenhouse on the middle school campus and her approach focuses on:

1. Embedding agricultural concepts in the classroom
2. Understanding the effects of nature on cognition
3. Enhancement of ecosystem studies using the SAMR model for educational technology integration (Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, Redefinition)
4. Emphasis of best practices within the 4-H approach to positive youth development
5. CURA (Center for Urban and Regional Affairs) cold climate greenhouse activities
6. Research on rates of teacher retention and student standardized test growth tied to the impact of greenhouses on school culture and climate





IT'S MORE THAN JUST DIRT

The following is an outline for Kate's It's More Than Just Dirt unit on plants, soils and entomology.

Objective: The objective of this project is to embrace the interdependence of NGSS Science Standards, Plant, Soils and Entomology Curriculum for an Agriculture Pathway of Horticulture.

Goal: To provide an elevated science curriculum blending NGSS (Next Generation Science Standards) with the theory and practice of a middle school agriculture program focusing on a pathway in horticulture. This goal would become a bridge to 8th grade physical science and then to the high school Dwayne O. Andreas Ag Academy program.



Below are operational steps to implement 4-H curriculum pieces.

ENTOMOLOGY

Students will participate in the hatching and the raising of chickens. Eggs are provided to the classroom, where students will complete lessons and curriculum to teach life science through the implementation of an urban chicken farm at their school site. By hatching and raising chickens, students develop an understanding of biology through direct experience with living things, their life cycles and their habitats.

GREENHOUSE

Students plant in Jiffy Peat for plants to be placed in the greenhouse. Then they prepare the soil by tilling and aerating, taking soil samples to test for pH, phosphorus, calcium and potassium. Compost will contribute to the necessary nutrients for successful plant growth. Once the soil is ready and the plants are ready for planting, students will transfer seedlings to beds for continued growth

COMPOST

Students will learn to compost material so that the greenhouse and planting material become sustainable.

Materials: Chicken coop/small run, secure storage shed, two composters, greenhouse supplies (shelves, soil, brooms, shovels, garden stakes, tool tower, watering cans, pruning shears, funnels, gloves, lawn cart, dustpans, and miscellaneous smaller items).

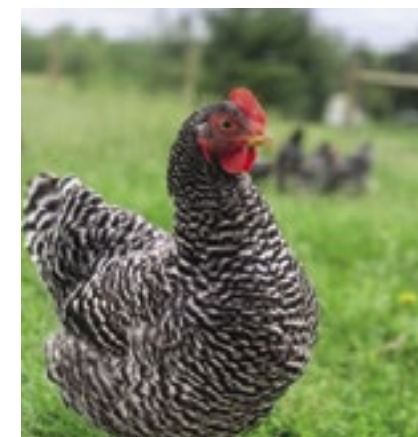
Projected Outcomes:

This elevated science curriculum supports typical middle school programming to enhance the variety of activities that engage students, enriching their middle school experience and ultimately supporting a successful bridge to the high school agricultural program.

Melissa Staples, a Special Education teacher at Eisenhower, is establishing a similar approach, but with a focus on horticulture; her students will work in collaboration with Andreas Ag Academy students in the newly-constructed Academy greenhouse.

ADDITIONAL PROGRAMMING IN DEVELOPMENT AT STEPHEN DECATUR MIDDLE SCHOOL INCLUDES:

- Creating a fish hatchery where the students raise fish, while growing plants and vegetables through hydroponics, and creating an understanding of how pollutants can affect a sustainable system
- Adding peacock eggs to the embryology unit
- A wild birds unit and ornithologist's presentation
- Providing tofu and potatoes as staples of the diet for crickets, which in turn feed the classroom bearded dragon
- A Horned Moth habitat producing caterpillars for the same purpose
- A study of soybeans and their role in the global food supply, connecting it back to the local agribusiness economy
- A subsequent trip to meet ADM food scientists who will introduce students to tofu, flavoring, and crop science



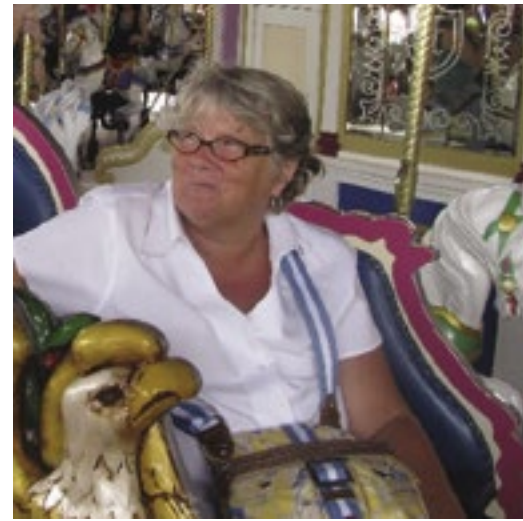


THE ELLEN SPYCHER TEACHER'S FUND

Anyone who knew Ellen Spycher will recall her quick wit and ready smile. Those who knew her well remember a deeply intellectual person who exhibited genuine concern for all who crossed her path. Those who knew her best miss a wife, mother, and beloved “Nina” to her grandchildren, a friend who cherished time with loved ones, and who valued education as central to a life well-lived.

Born in New York City in 1946, she married Richard (also a Big Apple native) in 1968. Daughter Beth and son Rich were then born in succession. Ellen’s college career was interrupted by the family’s move to Illinois, in 1976, prompted by her husband’s employment with ADM.

As the children grew, Ellen resumed her higher education where she left off years before. Steadily, a few courses at a time, she earned her way through an associate’s degree (Richland Community College), her bachelor’s degree (from Sangamon State, steadfastly refusing to change her diploma to read U. of I. – Springfield), her master’s degree and then her doctorate in Education (both at Illinois State University). All told, it took two decades to earn the Ph.D.



Ellen’s professional activities were devoted to literacy and its importance for every person.

Her name is on the plaque in the foyer of the Decatur Public Library, where she served as a board member while the building was completed. For ten years she worked for and managed Project Read, an outreach to adult learners. She taught the Masters in Reading program at ISU, and also English and related courses for undergraduates. Her coordination of a teaching cohort designed for Decatur educators helped several earn their own master’s degrees. Other work included the development of a reading methods curriculum for the Illinois prison system, as well as a program for teachers in Tanzania (where she visited several times to assist with implementation).

The long process by which she earned her own certifications gave Ellen an acute awareness of the encouragement a person needs along the way. To this end, she founded a scholarship program to provide annual assistance for a student pursuing ISU’s Masters in Reading.

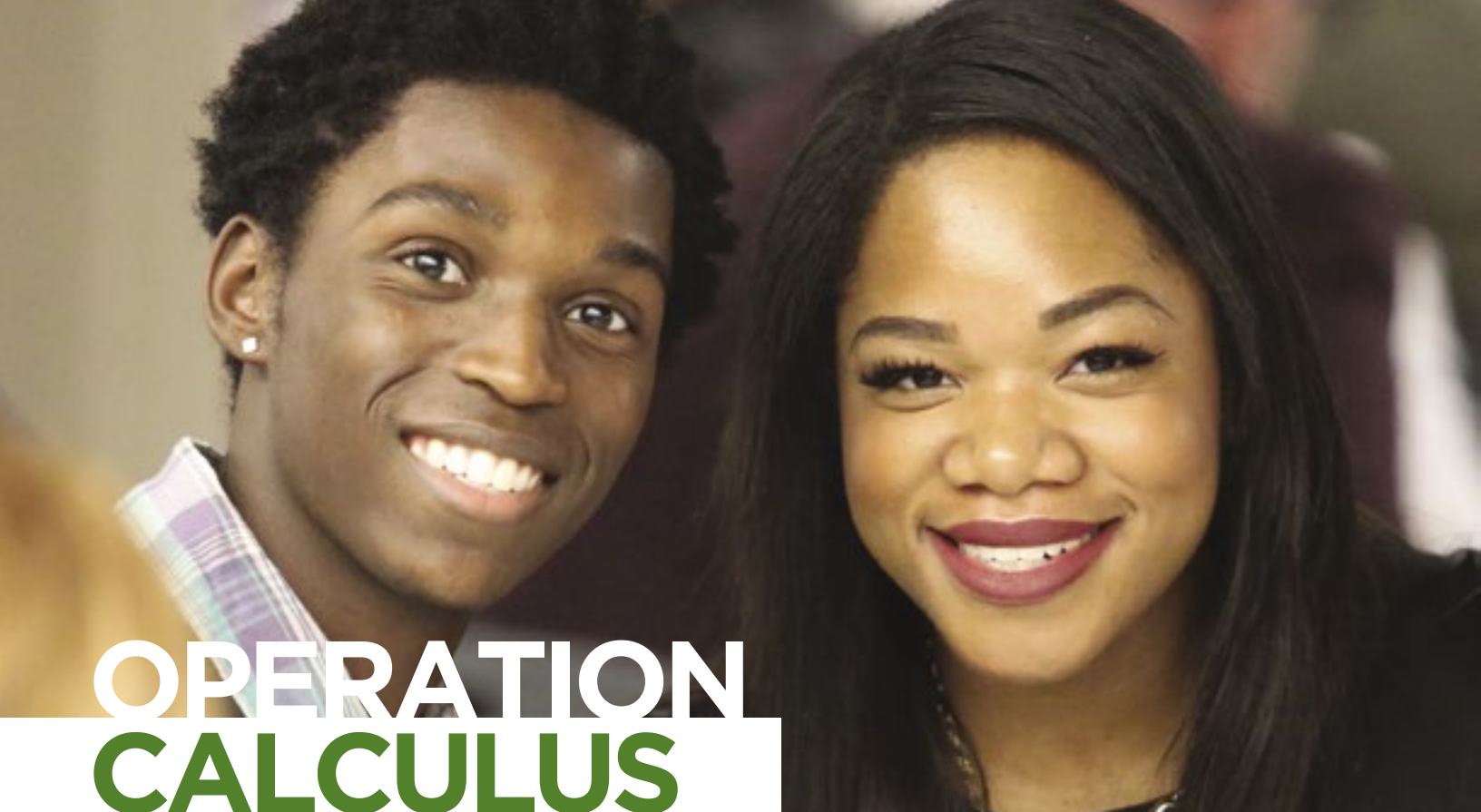
She also recognized the importance of supporting those already working directly with younger learners, establishing the Ellen Spycher Teacher’s Fund with the Decatur Public Schools Foundation. She realized that teachers are expected to deal with a multitude of issues above and beyond instruction. Every student carries something different in their figurative backpacks; effective educators feel a yearning to address it all, but often lack the resources to do so.

Ellen embodied this kindness, pairing it with a sense of fun and a colorful wit in keeping with her New York roots. After Ellen’s passing in February 2015, Martha Henderson – then a teacher at Muffley Elementary School – became a steward of the Fund.

“She was my mentor, my role model, and my best friend,” Martha says. If Ellen’s life were presented as a book, the cover “Would be a collage of, first and foremost, her family. It would also have pictures of her friends, places she has visited, titles of her favorite books, her dogs, and, of course, knitting needles. The title would be told through the pictures. That way each individual could give it their own.”

Martha oversees the distribution of classroom awards to 25 teachers each November. Winners submit their names to be drawn at random, and are advised to put the gift to use in a meaningful way. Every fall, this stroke of luck for each teacher reminds us of our good fortune in having known Ellen.

Thank you to those who have joined Rich and Ellen’s family in creating an endowment to remind teachers that their profession is the most important on the planet.



OPERATION CALCULUS

Prior to serving as principal at Eisenhower High School, Dr. Amy Zahm-Duncheon partnered with fellow building administrator Laura Anderson in 2014 to lead a team to establish Operational Calculus.

This cohort, made up of primarily African-American students, attends a voluntary summer Boot Camp to prep for higher-level math courses (for no credit). Students are then supported academically and socially throughout the school year. A dedicated counselor and multiple faculty members track program participants and provide individual encouragement throughout the calendar year.

This team-based approach fosters an atmosphere of positive peer reinforcement, as well as an expectation that graduation will lead to either immediate employment or higher education. One particularly engaging aspect has been summer visits to Historically Black Colleges and other universities of various sizes.

Outcomes for students often reach well beyond the classroom. As a parent shared with coordinators prior to this year’s trip to Jackson State University:

“I’m very excited for him... this is a very big deal to us. My husband passed away a few years ago unexpectedly and the impact of that has resulted in my son not wanting to venture too far from home or even attend many activities unless I am taking him. He hasn’t stayed anywhere except his grandparents’ and for no more than one night, and they live just a few houses from us. He calls and checks in with me every couple hours. I’ve been trying to have him join some after-school activities so he can make friends and have some positive, fun experiences. I’m grateful he is such a good kid... but I want him to have some normal experiences and not worry or be so anxious. So I am very thankful that Operation Calculus has given him the opportunity to participate in an extracurricular trip and this is a HUGE step for him.

Eisenhower’s coordinator, Justin Hampton, has led the program throughout its development. In 2017, Caterpillar funded a program expansion to incorporate MacArthur High School students. Prior years have also served a growing number of Junior Operation Calculus elementary and middle school students, first at Hope Academy and now open to students at any District 61 building. “JOC” students benefit from coached math sessions and tutoring, and are better prepared for the social shift to high school. Mentoring from Senior OC students helps smooth this transition.

THE FOLLOWING HISTORICAL SUMMARY REPRESENTS SUCCESS FOR STUDENTS ENGAGED IN THE PROGRAM BEGINNING WITH THE 2015 COHORT.

(EXCLUDING CURRENT PARTICIPANTS)

Dr. Jeremy Morris leads the newer program at MacArthur, which will see its first round of graduates in the 2021-2022 class, and has designed flexible Junior Operation Calculus instructional models to support students in virtual tutoring formats for the middle school grades.

COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES STUDENTS HAVE VISITED TO DATE:

- » South Carolina State
- » Claflin College
- » Morehouse University
- » Spellman College
- » Georgia Tech University
- » Tennessee State University
- » Vanderbilt University
- » University of Maryland
- » Florida State University
- » Florida A & M University
- » The Ohio State University
- » Illinois State University
- » Illinois Wesleyan University
- » Eastern Illinois University
- » SIU Edwardsville
- » University of Kentucky
- » University of Louisville
- » Jackson State University



Dr. Amy Zahm-Duncheon and Laura Anderson



TOTAL STUDENTS SINCE 2015	: 106
GRADUATION RATE	: 100%
COLLEGE ACCEPTANCE	: 100%
COLLEGES ATTENDED	: 32
COLLEGE GRADS AND ENROLLED	: 41
MILITARY SERVICE	: 4
APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS	: 2
COLLEGE CREDIT EARNED	: 39
NO CURRENT STATUS	: 13
CURRENT COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS	: 14
2020 COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS	: \$1,249,804
PRIOR SCHOLARSHIP OFFERS TOTALED:	: 2015 - \$474,200
	2016 - \$574,592
	2017 - \$1,399,128
	2018 - \$1,102,352
	2019 - \$706,000

**Note – dollars denote full value of student support on offer; i.e. one student may have scholarship offers from multiple institutions. These numbers will continue to grow as MacArthur students reach their senior year.*

INVESTORS HAVE INCLUDED:

**ADM, AMEREN, CATERPILLAR, TATE & LYLE
AND INDIVIDUAL OR FAMILY CONTRIBUTORS
SUCH AS THE TS & JUANITA BALLANCE FUND.**

**CATERPILLAR HAS BEEN THE LEAD SPONSOR,
CONTRIBUTING \$477,372 TO SUPPORT THIS
UNIQUE PROGRAM.**

KEITH BYARS

Keith Byars is a 2014 Operation
Calculus alum who spent two years
in the program prior to graduation.

That experience highlighted the importance of high school
engagement as it leads to life success. He served as a summer tutor
for struggling math students, and also represented the program
in Baltimore, MD, where he assisted to provide a conference
presentation on Operation Calculus. Keith took a full schedule
AP classes and Pre-calculus for his senior year, while pursuing dual
credits in the nursing program at Heartland Technical Academy
and Richland Community College. The Decatur Public Schools
Foundation recognized Keith as Eisenhower's Exceptional Senior,
and he expresses appreciation for the program's long-term value in
his development, noting that his former instructor will remain a
lifelong positive influence.



NEW PROGRAM ELEMENTS FOR 2021 INCLUDE:

STEM CAREER EXPLORATION AND READINESS

THE TJATY GROUP/
KYLE RISBY
AT MHS AND EHS

STEM SUCCESS ENRICHMENT

SCOTT DAVIDSON
AT SDMS AND HOPE
ACADEMY

THANK YOU

Dr. Amy Zahm-Duncheon, Laura Anderson, Justin Hampton, Brenda Hurns, Dr. Jeremy Morris, Dr. Juanita Morris, counselor Amanda Duckworth and support personnel Sonja Aten, Abby Emroski, Lisa Holmes, Lyndsay Lemanczyk, Rachel Lindsay and Jessica Moss, as well as all the prior Operation Calculus assistants and community partners who have played such important roles in shaping this impactful program.



SARAH SMITH

*Instructional Specialist
Dennis Lab School*



Sarah was recently selected from hundreds of candidates (and a multi-tiered interview process) to become a National Trainer for Project Based Learning (PBL) through the Buck Institute of Education.

This organization has guided the development of the lab school’s project-focused approach. Together, students and instructors design inquiry projects that delve deeper into academic and community-impact subject areas.

“Her first engagement was an intensive three-day training,” says assistant principal Keith Creighton. “We’re very excited about having a nationally certified PBL coach here at Dennis. As we build and develop into a destination district, Dennis will be positioned as a destination site for the project-based learning approach in Illinois. Several surrounding states have similar ‘hubs’ that offer trainings, conferences, and workshops for educators in their states. Illinois doesn’t have one. Our vision for the future includes positioning Dennis as that hub. It is tremendous to see Sarah have this opportunity to grow both as an individual and as a coach.”

Sarah has long been respected as a thoughtful and innovative personality in the District, and has been recognized as an Outstanding Educator honored by the Foundation.

Instructional specialists invest time with fellow teachers to create the student-focused culture inherent to quality learning spaces. The efforts of individual educators are reinforced and enriched by dedicated coaches.

“She helped me transform my classroom into a powerful learning environment,” says Creighton, who was still teaching at that time. “She was right by my side to console me, cheer me on, and give me a kick in the pants when I needed it... changing culture is the hardest thing to do and she was a godsend.”

OTHER LAB SCHOOL TEACHERS PROVIDED SIMILAR STATEMENTS IN SUPPORT OF HER NOMINATION.

“She modeled (teaching) for me, observed me, gave praise and suggestions for improvement. As a result of Sarah’s help and support I felt comfortable stepping outside of my comfort zone and trying something challenging and different. She is helping put Dennis on the map as one of the best schools in Illinois.”

“Last year, I really struggled to find the passion for teaching that I have had throughout my life. Thankfully, Sarah Smith stepped into my room... by the end of the year I was not the lecture-giving, only note-taking teacher anymore. I became a student-centered, data-driven, creative instructional methods teacher who finally LOVED my job.” Creighton sums up her impact on the building this way: “It is next to impossible to find a successful program at Dennis that does not have the invisible fingerprints of her coaching all over it.”

For the 2020-2021 academic year, Sarah joins fellow instructional specialists in a transition back to the classroom; she and other talented District educators continue to provide supportive peer-to-peer mentorship that strengthens the climate and culture for students and fellow faculty.



THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF MACON COUNTY

The DPS Foundation is built on relationships. These include both individuals directly involved with programming and collaboration with other Decatur organizations. Of these, none is more consistently supportive of our public schools than the Community Foundation.

“We are so proud to support effective programming to benefit students,” says President Natalie Beck. “Our donors contribute to programs that make a real difference all across Macon County, and we feel strongly about the importance of supporting children in Decatur’s public schools.”

Natalie, her predecessor – Wegi Stewart – and the Community Foundation’s professional staff do a remarkable job facilitating conversations with individuals who have an interest in education. There is never a question Vice President Missy Batman can’t answer, and their team has a remarkable feel for the pulse of the community. They are an invaluable resource for both funding and advice on a variety of topics, managing more than 300 separate donor-advised funds and providing countless scholarships to District 61 graduates and other college-bound seniors in the area.

This relationship provides a simple pathway for investors with funds at the Community Foundation to direct dollars that enhance the student experience in the Decatur Public Schools. Please get in touch with Natalie to inquire about initiatives you wish to support. She can be reached via nbeck@maconcountygives.org or at (217) 429-3000.

“Reading should not be presented to children as a chore or duty. It should be offered to them as a precious gift.”

– Kate DiCamillo

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION DONORS HAVE SUPPORTED OUR COMMUNITY’S PUBLIC SCHOOLS WITH OVER \$700,000 FOR VARIED PROGRAMS SINCE 2012.

Over this period, combined gifts of \$318,802 have directly sponsored **Decatur Public Schools Foundation** activities, inclusive of undesigned individual gifts while also funding (in whole or part) the following initiatives:

Big Blue Backpacks
Close Up Washington
Creative Classroom Science (Pat Mohan Fund)
Dave Griffith Creative Writing Workshop
Durfee Magnet Playground Renovation
Elementary and Middle-School Cross Country
Eloise Ivens Sears Memorial (Beautify Decatur – School Littering Initiative)
French STEM Academy Maker Space (Nims Family)
Harris 7 Mindsets
High School Choral Formal Wear (Nims Family)
Junior Olympics
Kids + Books = Success
Kistler-Scott Fund for the Performing Arts (Instrument Purchases)
Leading the Way Athletics Fund
Legacy of Learning Outstanding Alumni event
Library Enhancement Project (Lou Miglio Fund)
Mandarin Language Lessons
Michael Beschloss Lecture – Presidential Historian
Montessori Outdoor Recreation Space
Nolan Classroom Gifts
Operation Calculus (Lee J. Robinson Fund)
Parent Leadership Training Initiative (PLTI)
Pre-Kindergarten Enrichment
Project-Based Learning (Dennis Lab School)
Reimer Family Classroom Awards
Resource Center Furnishings Grant (Dennis Lab School)
Sherrod’s Independent Mentoring Program
South Shores Chess
South Shores STEAM Stations
Teacher Certification Fund
U. of I. Pollinators Unit
West End Community Garden (Dennis Lab School)

KIDS+BOOKS=SUCCESS

The Foundation’s free book distribution program replaced Reading is Fundamental when federal funding disappeared in 2012. Since 2013, contributing partners have provided \$207,900 to support this important initiative. Students are free to browse, choose, and take home several books each year to share with parents and siblings in establishing a home library.

Mission and Vision

- » To have a literate America in which all children have access to books and discover the joys and value of reading
- » To motivate children to read by having teachers, librarians, assistants, and administrators working with children, parents and community members to make reading a fun and beneficial part of everyday life.

Managed by Library Resource Specialist Amy Edrington, 10,685 books reached elementary students last school year, adopting a theme of IT’S SHOWTIME AT YOUR LIBRARY!

A special thank you to the James Millikin Estate, the TS and Juanita Ballance Foundation, the John Ullrich Foundation, Anne Hostetler and all the other organizations and individuals who have supported this cornerstone literacy outreach. The Foundation is grateful to past coordinators Leeann Grossman and Sonya Johnson for their thoughtful stewardship of this creative way to influence literacy.

A structure that originally provided book selections for Kindergarten through 6th graders twice per year has expanded to add titles for kids from Pre-K through high school, incorporating a “One Book, One School” model for older students.



The Foundation seeks to fund special initiatives across the District in support of teaching and learning. Beyond simply funding good ideas, another function is to recognize and celebrate and help to articulate the meaningful moments taking place throughout the Decatur Public Schools. Harris Elementary Life and Essential Skills teachers have applied for dozens of grants in recent years, indicating a willingness to step beyond business-as-usual and create a caring environment for every student. We expect to provide additional support for Harris teachers and students as they continue their transition in merging with Hope Academy.



PHIL SHILS

Parent of Lucia and Felix

Tomorrow is Lucia’s last day at William Harris Elementary School.

It’s the home of the Pandas. The non-special education students there come from challenging backgrounds and it also is where the Essential Skills section of the elementary school age special education program in Decatur is housed. There are Life Skills students there as well. Lucia has been in the Essential Skills section. That’s a gentle way to indicate the special education students that need work with skills that we would consider more rudimentary. When Amanda and I first found out that Lucia would be in the essential skills section we were very resistant. We said: mainstream her with an assistant. Lucia’s first teacher at Harris told us (gently) that under those circumstances Lucia would be an island. The staff at Harris school has worked tirelessly and in the face of budgetary challenges and limited resources to insure that Lucia is not an island. They changed our fear of surrender into an acknowledgement of opportunity. They have always presumed competence and set the bar high. They are heroes. They taught Lucia to eat with a spoon. They fill me with hope. They got Lucia to bounce on a trampoline. They inspire through love and persistence and creativity. They got Lucia to smile for school pictures. They will always be family. They deserve your acknowledgement and utmost respect. We love and appreciate them all.

Go Pandas!

– Phil Shils

CREATIVE WRITING IN THE CLASSROOM



Bringing students and teachers into contact with accomplished professionals is one way donors create a direct, outside-world impact on Decatur classrooms.

Dave Griffith is a native of a Decatur and a 1994 graduate of Stephen Decatur High School. He received his BA in English from the University of Notre Dame and his MFA in creative writing from the University of Pittsburgh. For the past twenty years, Dave has taught English and creative writing to students at a variety of institutions, both secondary and higher-education, including the University of Notre Dame, Saint Mary’s College, the University of Pittsburgh, the Pittsburgh Creative and Performing Arts High School, and Sweet Briar College.

From 2013-2017 he directed the creative writing program at Interlochen Center for the Arts, the oldest and largest independent arts boarding school in the country. Most recently he served as Vice President for Education at Chautauqua Institution in New York. He is the author of A Good War is Hard to Find: The Art of Violence in America, a collection of personal essays reflecting on the ways that images of violence in film, literature, and in news media shape our collective understanding of violence as a means of solving problems.

“I wouldn’t be where I am today had I not had such an excellent education in Decatur Public Schools,” says Dave. “So to be able to give back to the community that raised me and formed me is easily one of the most rewarding experiences of my career as an arts educator. I look forward to the opportunity of helping to support the success of DPS students now and in the future.

This past year, Beth Nolan, Fred Spannaus, Wegi Stewart, and the MacArthur Victory Fund contributed to support Dave’s creative writing workshop visits to Eisenhower and MacArthur.

“Acknowledging the accomplishments of former students is the best way to validate the success of our district,” says Beth. “We’re grateful when our graduates want to return to share their talents and knowledge to inspire the next generation of DPS students and future grads.”

Dave’s interactive workshop invited students to explore their immediate perceptions and inherent biases as they attempted to describe visual, vocal and written prompts. That evening, he also led a masterclass for faculty on strategies for integrating creative writing focused on students’ life experiences, with an objective to stimulate more careful and critical reading practices. The session was conceived to equip those teaching expository writing, all levels of English literature, and History, though teachers who attended felt the strategies also have applications for comprehension of math and science.

“At the heart of it, any time we can invest both intellectually and emotionally, we connect better to whatever material is put before us,” says Dr. Josh Peters, former Director of Curriculum and Instruction for Secondary grades. “The engagement with a text or concept is more authentic, and enables us to gain a deeper understanding of why something’s important.”

MILLIKIN
UNIVERSITY

LEGACY OF LEARNING

Every November, the Decatur Public Schools Foundation celebrates the legacy of graduates who have gone on to make their mark in all manner of endeavors.

The Trustees take great satisfaction in sharing the stories of accomplished individuals recognized as Outstanding Alumni from our high schools. Each year it's a challenge to select two honorees from a large pool of deserving candidates. The same can be said for selecting our Outstanding Educator. There are many devoted teachers worthy of recognition, and a rewarding part of the process is reviewing nomination materials put forward by peers – and on occasion students as well!



Thank You to Millikin University

for hosting this traditional gathering each autumn, and to the nominators who make a special effort to bring such remarkable candidates to the Trustees for consideration.

Featured throughout this report are profiles of Outstanding Alumni recognized in recent years. Our event falls the second Saturday of November, with an honorees' reception the Friday evening prior.

THOSE WHO WISH TO NOMINATE A CANDIDATE FOR THE COMING YEAR MAY DO SO BY CONTACTING THE FOUNDATION DIRECTLY BY PHONE (217) 362-3042, OR WORKING VIA THE DIRECTOR AT

ZSHIELDS@DPS61.ORG



ADDITIONAL CORPORATE SUPPORTERS



PAST OUTSTANDING EDUCATOR HONOREES



2011
JOE SMITH



2014
SARAH SMITH



2017
DEB RYAN



2012
DAN FUENTES



2015
DIANNE ASAY



2018
KIM SCHAFER



2013
KATE MCKEARN



2016
SARAH PRITTS



2019
SUSIE NIESMAN



Congressional Medal
of Honor Recipient

1974
LOREN DOUGLAS HAGEN (MHS)
"All gave some and some gave all."

Distinguished
Service to the
District Honorees

- » MIKE SOTIROFF
- » STEPHANIE BALES

OUTSTANDING ALUMNI HONOREES

Past honorees of Decatur High School (DHS), Eisenhower High School (EHS), Lakeview High School (LHS), MacArthur High School (MHS) and Stephen Decatur High School are listed below by the year in which they are honored. Biographies for our recent honorees appear throughout this Report to Donors.

- 2001
ADELE GLENN (FOUNDING TRUSTEE)
TOM SWARTZ (DHS)
- 2002
ROBERT SMITH (SDHS - FOUNDING TRUSTEE)
JACQUELINE GOETTER (FOUNDING TRUSTEE)
DR. BILL REQUARTH (DHS)
- 2003
JASON SMALL (MHS)
COREY JEFFERSON (EHS)
KRISTIN JANKOWICZ (MHS)
JULIE YOUNGER (EHS)
RICHARD LOCKE III (EHS)
MARK LOCKE (EH)
MICHAEL LOCKE (EHS)
JONATHON LOCKE (EHS)
- 2004
ANITA BUCKNER (SDHS)
KENNETH BUTTS (MHS)
JOHN FERRY (MHS)
JASON WILLIAMS (MHS)
BRIAN PALMER (SDHS)
- 2005
KEIA BROWN (EHS)
TOBY GRUBB (MHS)
MICHAEL BORDERS (LHS)
MICHAEL DURNIL (EHS)
SANDRA MAYS (EHS)
- 2006
MICHAEL ADKESSON (SDHS)
WARE FLORA (MHS)
TORRIA NORMAN (MHS)
PAMELA (KASHEFSKA) CHURCH (MHS)
JON BALLOG (SDHS)
CATHERINE (WRIGLEY) MALLETT (EHS)

- 2007
MIKAELA HUNT (MHS)
COREY MCAFEE (MHS)
LARRY OSBORNE (MHS)
GRETCHEN LIKINS BYRKIT (MHS)
MARCIA MOREY (MHS)
PRESTON JACKSON (SDHS)
- 2008
CHRISTOPHER WILKINSON (MHS)
SHANNON GREELEY (MHS)
MARY MOSER (SDHS)
JAMES COBB (MHS)
DUANE LIVINGSTON (SDHS)
- 2009
JEREMY LYCAN (EHS)
SHAWN HORGES (SDHS)
CHRISTINE BENNETT (EHS)
LLOYD LARSON (MHS)
DAYLE COCHRAN IRWIN (SDMS)
DAVID WALLER (MHS)
- 2010
JILL ROSENBERGER POWERS (SDHS)
STEVE LATSHAW (LHS)
JEANNIE MOLLOHAN (LHS)
STEVEN P. BEST (EHS)
WALT SMITH (SDHS)
- 2011
DR. DANA RAY (SDHS)
BRAD SCHOENEBERG (EHS)
BARBARA BAIRD (MHS)
DR. LARRY REED (SDHS)
THOMAS HARRINGTON (MHS)
BRUCE ALLEN GRIMES (DHS)

- 2012
BETH NOLAN (EHS)
DR. TIMOTHY PRITTS (EHS)
TEAH MOORE (EHS)
THERESA RUTHERFORD (EHS)
DONALD BLANKENSHIP (MHS)
LARRY FOSTER (EHS)
RICHARD CHAMBLIN (MHS)
- 2013
ROBERT CLEAVE (MHS)
DONNA (WILLIAMSON) THOMPSON (EHS)
- 2014
DAWN (MORVILLE) JOHNSON (SDHS)
GEORGE PINNEY (EHS)
- 2015
RICHARD P. MAXWELL (MHS)
CYNTHIA DEADRICK-WOLFER (MHS)
- 2016
EYVONNE HAWKINS (EHS)
JESSE REISING (EHS)
- 2017
DR. GIANINA BAKER (EHS)
ED GERMAN (MHS)
- 2018
DR. JANET (BEST) ALBERS (LHS)
DR. LEE ENDSLEY (DHS)
- 2019
SARAH ELIZABETH IPPEL (EHS)
JIM "MAC" MCELROY (DHS)



EYVONNE HAWKINS

*Eisenhower High School,
Class of 1975*

Commitment - Respect - Excellence - Accountability - Diversity

These words signify Richland Community College’s approach to equipping students for careers and lifelong learning. They also represent the devotion Eyyonne Hawkins has shown to her hometown. Her positive presence is apparent in the lives she has touched, and the support she provides to students who need someone standing in their corner.

Currently a professor of Education and African American Studies, Eyyonne started her 23-year career at Richland as an administrative assistant in the Nursing and Radiography programs.

Shortly thereafter, she began to pursue her passion for teaching. After earning an associate’s degree at Richland she attained a Bachelor’s in History from the University of Illinois at Springfield, graduating Magna Cum Laude with a Secondary Education certification. Her Master’s degree is in Teacher Leadership.

Eyyonne’s service to Decatur students dates to volunteer time spent at Washington Elementary School, tutoring students who struggled with reading and encouraging them to consider the importance of academics. Later she would play an instrumental role in the development of an education career track at Richland, and also created dual credit relationships in African American Studies with both of our high schools. During her tenure she has been selected as both Faculty Member of the Year and a Richland Distinguished Alumna.

As her list of involvements demonstrates, our honoree’s commitment to assisting others takes many forms. Collectively, her activities demonstrate the importance of supporting one another and creating opportunities for others in whatever ways we’re able. Her life and career are a testament to the transformative power of education.

Richland Community College College Futures Program

As a student at Richland, Eyyonne worked with Dr. Jeanelle Norman and the high school College Futures program, which was designed to encourage minority students to seek education beyond high school.

International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP)

Eyyonne was a member of IAAP for more than a decade. This organization sponsored the annual Decatur “Secretary’s Breakfast.” Members also served as test proctors and judges for the office technology portion of a competition hosted by the Illinois Future Business Leaders of America High Schools program. She has continued as a judge of the state’s event for the past 18 years.

Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA) -
This international organization prepares high school and college students to become leaders and seek careers in marketing, management, and entrepreneurship by developing their skills and providing leadership opportunities in business, finance, hospitality, marketing, sales and service. Eyyonne has served as a judge for Illinois DECA competitions for the past ten years.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

Eyyonne has been a member of the Decatur NAACP branch served as an officer under the leadership of Dr. Jeanelle Norman and Jeffrey Perkins.

Eyyonne has served the community on the Anna Waters Head Start Policy Council and the Macon County Mental Health Board. She joined the Foundation as a Trustee a year following her recognition.



DR. GIANINA BAKER

*Eisenhower High School,
Class of 2000*

As a child, Gianina aspired to become a medical doctor. But her career inventory survey indicated that she would do well as a principal – and she already enjoyed providing “instruction” for her two younger sisters. Her mother, Tina, also felt she would become a tremendous teacher or professor (and frequently points out that it would have saved Gianina time and money had she listened to her Mom from the start).

Her Baum Elementary kindergarten teacher (Mrs. Bandy) encouraged Gianina’s naturally avid interest in reading. After graduating from Eisenhower, Gianina attended Illinois Wesleyan and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology in 2004. While at Illinois Wesleyan University, Gianina was a 9-time All-American in Division III Track & Field and still holds a few records in track and cross-country.

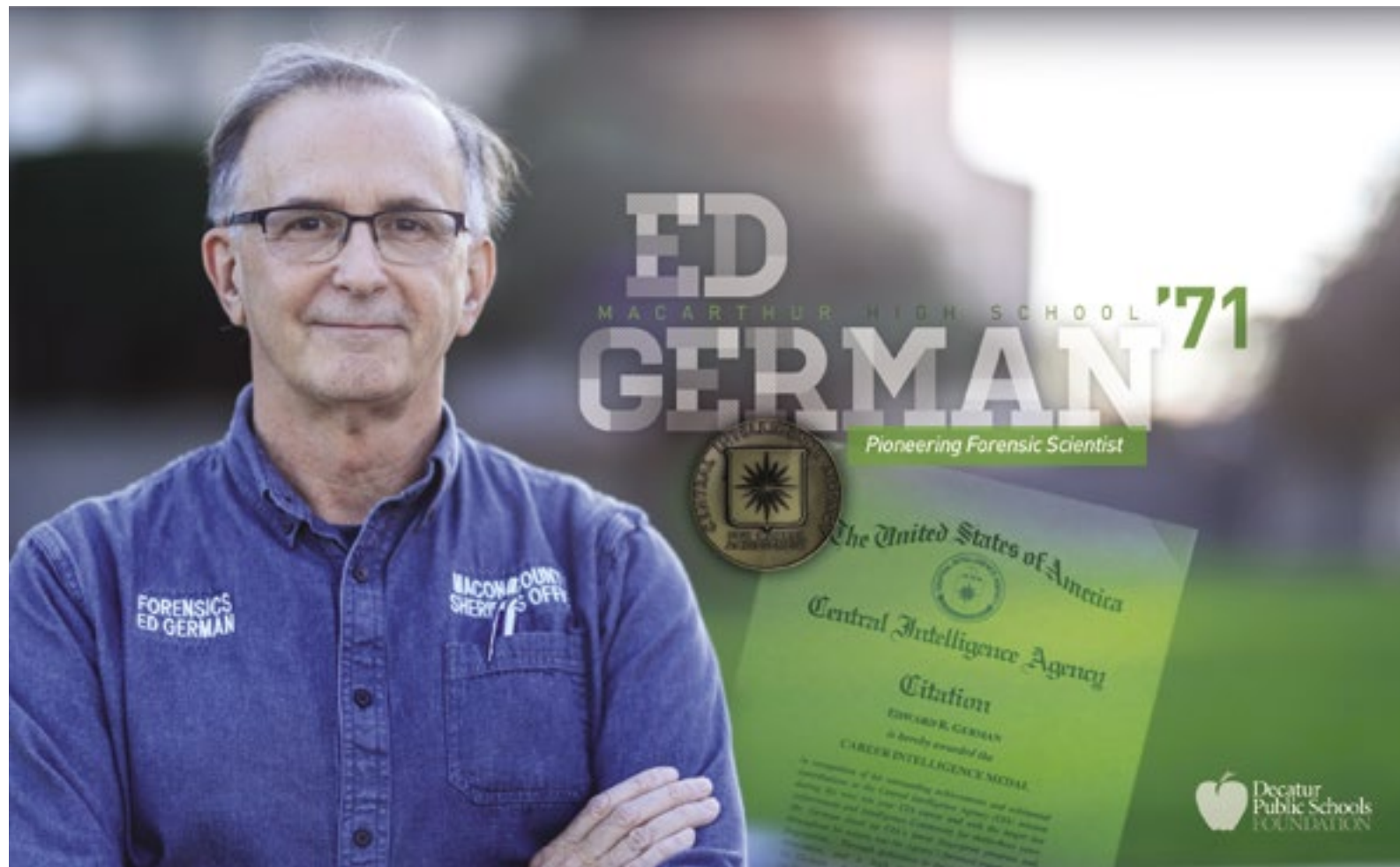
Gianina earned her Master of Arts in Human Development Counseling from Saint Louis University in 2006. She went on to obtain her Ph.D. in Educational Organization & Leadership (with a concentration in higher education) from the University of Illinois in 2016.

Gianina earned her Master of Arts in Human Development Counseling from Saint Louis University in 2006. She went on to obtain her Ph.D. in Educational Organization & Leadership (with a concentration in higher education) from the University of Illinois in 2016.

Our honoree is Assistant Director at the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA). In this role she assists postsecondary institutions in providing evidence of student progress within collegiate courses of study. She began at NILOA as a graduate research analyst while completing her Ph.D. In addition to general outcomes assessment, her specific research interests include higher education policy and access and equity issues for underrepresented students and administrators. She has facilitated panel discussions and workshops on numerous related topics. A 2014 report found that just 6.4 percent of doctoral degrees in the United States went to African-Americans. Two years later, Gianina earned one of only 15 Ph.D.’s awarded to African-American women in the College of Education at the University of Illinois.

Gianina’s personal commitment to education extends to service on the Champaign Unit 4 School Board, to which she was re-elected in April 2017 for a four-year term. She has also served on the district’s Education Equity Excellence (EEE) Committee. At the building level, she is directly involved with the parent organization at Carrie Busey Elementary. In addition, she and her husband Ron volunteer their time coaching their boys (now ages 13, 11, and 7) in various extracurricular activities. The couple provides support for the Crisis Nursery in Urbana, IL, where Ron serves as a board member.

Prior to their move to Champaign, Gianina served as Director of Institutional Research and the Director of Institutional Effectiveness & Planning at Richland Community College. In that role she also counseled individual students as they navigated through personal and educational issues. Though not currently active in the field, she is a Licensed Professional Counselor and maintains this licensure through continuing education.



ED GERMAN

*MacArthur High School,
Class of 1971*

Ed is an internationally recognized forensic scientist specializing in human identification (fingerprints, facial and iris ID). He started as an FBI fingerprint clerk in 1971, one month after graduating from MacArthur High School in three years, and ended federal government service as a Senior Research Scientist (GS-15) at the CIA in 2015. Over a four-decade period, Ed worked in the field of human identification for the FBI, U.S. Army, Illinois State Police, and CIA.

In the 1970s he was recognized for his research in Japan as co-inventor of the superglue fuming process, which more than doubled the amount of fingerprints recovered from nonporous surfaces.

Four decades later, this technique is still used by every crime laboratory and police agency worldwide to develop hard-surface fingerprints. In the 1980s, Ed discovered the first reliable method for detecting fingerprints via laser excitation, and testified as an expert witness in the first criminal trial involving fingerprints developed by laser. In this period he also worked with Illinois State Police (ISP) Crime Laboratory System to develop the ISP's 104-week fingerprint expert training program, creating ISP's quality assurance program for fingerprints, and for establishing America's first forensic laboratory digital imaging capability. ISP became the first accredited forensic laboratory system in the world.

During the 1990's the federal government encountered the first legal challenge to the science of fingerprint identification since 1911. To defend fingerprint science, the Department of Justice used direct testimony from the senior expert from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the senior expert from the FBI laboratory, and Ed, at that time the Army's senior-ranking military Forensic Scientist/Special Agent.

Immediately after 9-11, Ed was appointed Chief of Intelligence for U.S. Army Law Enforcement worldwide, having already received the highest peacetime military medal (the Legion of Merit) for his foreign counterintelligence work. Upon retiring from active duty in 2005, Ed served at the embassy in Baghdad as the Forensic Officer overseeing American actions in Iraq. That assignment lasted until his appointment as a Senior Research Scientist for the CIA. Ed served for a decade on six continents, and in December 2015 the CIA Director awarded him the Career Intelligence Medal for over 30 years of service. Ed does not have a college degree, but more universities, police agencies, and forensic laboratories link to his 3,000+ page website than any other worldwide resource.

Ed refers to himself as "Forrest Gump," in reference to his unusual range of experiences. You might catch him on the History Channel's Forensic Files series, explaining cold cases and his work on the Tylenol Cyanide and Nightstalker Serial Murders. He's been active with the Boy Scouts of America since the 1970s, and is the primary author of the Fingerprinting Merit Badge pamphlet. Upon returning to Macon County in 2016, Ed accepted a position as the Sheriff's Office's only forensic scientist, vastly improving local forensic capabilities and creating the first automated facial recognition system in Illinois. He is also the World's Luckiest Husband (per his wife).



JESSE REISING

*Eisenhower High School,
Class of 2007*

Jesse Reising attended Baum Elementary, Thomas Jefferson Middle School and Eisenhower High School, where he excelled in multiple sports and graduated as valedictorian.

He enrolled at Yale University, playing linebacker and double-majoring with distinction in economics and political science.

In his time there Jesse was named to the Academic All-Ivy football team and was a semifinalist for the William V. Campbell Trophy, often referred to as the “Academic Heisman,” awarded to the nation’s top football scholar-athlete for “academic distinction, civic leadership, and on-field performance.”

He also earned the Chester Laroche Award, presented to the player who “by his character, academic talents, and concern for others, did the most for Yale.”

Jesse participated in Marine Corps Officer Candidates’ School with plans to accept a commission as a second lieutenant after graduation. Then, late in the Yale-Harvard game his senior season – the last of his career – he was involved in a collision that tore two nerves in his neck and left his right arm largely paralyzed. This devastating injury derailed his military ambitions and set him on another course.

Upon graduation Jesse was presented with the David Chantler Award, given to the graduating Yale senior who “best exemplifies the qualities of courage, strength of character, and high moral purpose.” In that spirit he set about serving his country in another capacity, traveling to Afghanistan in a civilian support role for U.S. and NATO efforts in the region. From 2011 to 2012, he oversaw construction and engineering projects at a combat outpost in Afghanistan’s Kunar Province. Through interaction with enlisted soldiers, he perceived another way to serve.

Returning home, Jesse co-founded the Warrior-Scholar Project, a nonprofit organization providing academic “boot camps” at some of the nation’s top universities. The program’s purpose is unlocking the potential of veterans transitioning from the military back to civilian life and the pursuit of higher education. In 2012, the organization’s first year, it served nine veterans. Over the four years since, the Warrior-Scholar Project has raised more than \$4 million and served approximately 500 veterans at a dozen host universities across the country. New academic partnerships are established each year to broaden the project’s reach.

While leading this expansion, Jesse studied at Harvard Law School, re-learning how to write while adapting to the paralysis of his right arm. Today he is a federal prosecutor with the U.S. Department of Justice in Chicago, where he focuses on white collar crime. Jesse was awarded the Attorney General’s Award for Community Service, and has spoken before Congress on the subject of civic leadership and the vital importance of education for veterans. We are proud to recognize Jesse as an Outstanding Alum of the Decatur Public Schools!



WARRIOR-SCHOLAR.ORG



DR. JANET ALBERS

*Lakeview High School,
Class of 1978*

Lakeview High graduate Dr. Janet Albers has a simple reminder for future physicians in residence at Southern Illinois University's Center for Family Medicine. Medical students enter this phase of their education after instruction from specialists in areas of very specific concentration.

*"But I tell our residents,
we specialize in the patient."*

Dr. Albers emphasizes the notion that understanding the whole person is imperative to providing the best medical intervention.

In her view, treating an ailment without a comprehensive assessment is akin to addressing a symptom rather than the underlying cause. This holds true for every practice, but particularly in systems seeking to help populations with specific health risks.

The "population health" approach means understanding how lifestyle and home environment affect a patient's overall well-being. For example, life in a crime-ridden neighborhood means families may be less prone to exercise outdoors, a contributing factor for diabetes, obesity and a host of other concerns. Access to quality dietary options is another enormous risk to low-income patients.

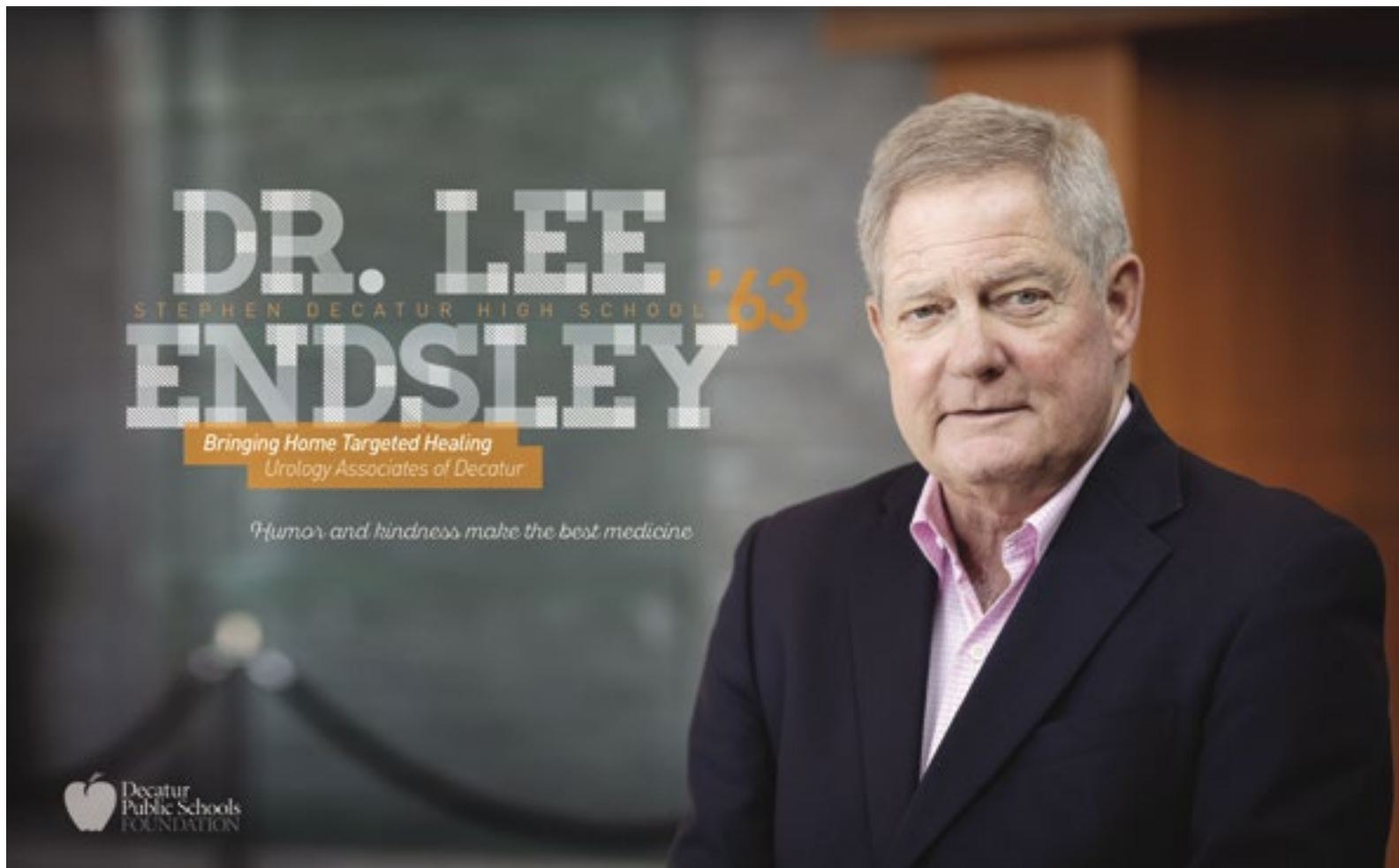
Adopting this mindset incorporates an understanding of mental health, as well. "Family medicine is everything from delivering babies to geriatrics," she says, which implies a vast host of conditions to diagnose. A team approach permits each person in a healthcare facility to play to their strengths, and encourages them to tap into other realms of expertise. A social worker may observe clinical residents interacting with patients, then provide feedback to improve communication skills and connect with people at a more meaningful level. Pooling mental resources this way translates into more effective care regardless of age, stage or ailment.

A graduate of Illinois Wesleyan University, Janet was a Fulbright scholar at Friedrich Alexander University in Germany, then continued her education at the SIU School of Medicine and Mayo School of Medicine.

In 2014 Dr. Albers was named SIU's Chair of the Department of Family and Community Medicine, becoming the first woman to occupy this role in the department's 44-year history. Her residency training program maintains sites in Carbondale, Decatur, Quincy and Springfield, where approximately 90 faculty and practice professionals see more than 40,000 patients per year and annually produce nearly 70 family medical doctors and physician assistants.

A former dean and provost once said of Janet that "In her practice, she shows how someone can practice medicine not only with compassion and caring, but also with an enthusiasm that is contagious..."

Over her career to date, Dr. Albers has been widely recognized for her impact on the field, and serves in a number of diverse professional or volunteer roles. These include involvement with, among others: the State Health Improvement Planning and Implementation Council; the Illinois Academy of Family Physicians (Board Chair and past President); the Illinois Children's Healthcare Foundation; Coordinated Access to Community Health; the Sangamon County Medical Society (President); the Robert Wood Johnson Connect Project (Washington, D.C.); and the Mental Health Centers of Central Illinois. Charitable activities include: Keep the Kids in School; Run United; Central Illinois Food Bank; Healthcare for the Homeless; and Special Olympics.



DR. LEE ENDSLEY

*Stephen Decatur High School,
Class of 1963*

Dr. Endsley has easily broken the (informal) “Hey, how come you haven’t recognized him as an Outstanding Alum yet?” record for the Decatur Public Schools. His blend of professionalism and humor merges the profile of a pioneering physician with the reassuring air of a small-town doctor. Toss in the fact that his expertise lies in a very specific (and sensitive) area of focus, and it’s easy to see why his fan club is so extensive.

A man of many talents, young Lee Endsley played on the 1962 Stephen Decatur State Championship basketball team, while his talents on the diamond earned him a baseball/academic scholarship at the University of Iowa. As a member of the 1962 team he was inducted into both the Decatur and Illinois Basketball Halls of Fame.

According to nominator Denny Mahorney, Lee developed a “Laughter is medicine for the soul” approach that sets patients and their families at ease. It’s likely this ability surfaced earlier, with his designation as Orator for the senior class. Undergraduate and post-graduate medical degrees led to an entry opportunity at Maricopa County General Hospital (Phoenix, Arizona), then a residency in urology back in Iowa City.

When prepared to settle into practice Dr. Endsley chose to return home to Decatur, eventually establishing Decatur Urology with two colleagues. He and his associates worked together until his retirement in 2008, at which time he took up teaching roles at both Richland Community College and Millikin University. He also spent seven years as a hospital administrator at St. Mary’s, where he mentored his “kids” and they called him “Boss.” (They still do.)

During that time, he organized hospitalists and successfully campaigned to establish the SIU urology office on site. Over the 30 years prior, students recall a role model who took them under his wing at the office, in the operating room and to visit patients while who were admitted. More than anything else, they note his humor, kindness and patience with both patients and protégés.

Professional accomplishments include the first implementation in Decatur of the: lipotropic machine process (pulverizing and removing kidney stones); seed implant and “microwave” procedures (addressing prostate cancer); and urethra scope (if there’s an apparatus that makes this easier, we’re all for it). Dr. Endsley has held memberships with the American and Illinois Boards of Urology, the American College of Surgeons, the Rubin F. Flocks Society, the American Fertility Society and the Macon County Medical Society. He serves presently on the St. Mary’s Hospital Board of Directors.

Lee overcame back surgery ten days ago to be at the event tonight. The procedure went perfectly, which (POSSIBLY) relates to the fact that he recruited and hired the surgeon. He is proud of the fact that Mrs. Endsley (Pam) and also their children (Paige, Ashley and Matt) are graduates of the Decatur Public Schools.

DONNA (WILLIAMSON) THOMPSON

*Decatur High School,
Class of 1975*

**CEO - ACCESS COMMUNITY
HEALTH NETWORK**

Donna (Decatur High School, Class of 1975) has been on the healthcare frontlines for more than 35 years, committing her career to providing high-quality, affordable services to underserved populations.

She is an advocate for those who cannot speak up for themselves, promoting the role that proper medical intervention plays in saving lives, revitalizing communities and ensuring a high quality of life for every person.

Beginning her career as a practicing nurse, she has a first-hand understanding of the difficulties faced by impoverished and uninsured patients. Named CEO at ACCESS in 2004, she has led the organization's growth into one of the largest federally qualified health centers (FQHC) in the United States. It serves over 200,000 patients annually, of whom 50,000 are uninsured. A comprehensive, community-based approach maintains 40 locations and incorporates more than 20 special services in highly at-risk urban areas of Chicago, as well as suburban Cook and DuPage counties. Their \$116 budget delivers care through 300 medical providers, including more than a half-million in-person appointments and more

than 3,000 births. ACCESS has embraced a model that helps patients navigate the gap between available community care and other hospital or primary resources. The United Way of Metro Chicago has recognized the organization as both its Agency of the Year and for Outstanding Leadership in Continuous Quality Improvement awards.

Beyond daily operations, Donna organized the "Stand Against Cancer" statewide initiative 11 years ago, engaging 1,400 supporters from every ethnicity and background to advocate for (and succeed in) doubling funding for breast and cervical cancer screenings. The ACCESS organization's seven year-old Pin a Sister/ Examine Comadre project promotes vigilance in the fight against cancer by honoring African-American and Latino breast-cancer survivors on Mother's Day. More than 700,000 participants in both American and global congregations have taken part in this faith-based initiative. Donna frequently travels home to represent the Pin-A-Sister program at the Decatur Correctional Center for women.

Education has always been of paramount importance to this year's honoree. Raised by one parent without a high-school diploma and another who served as a nurse's aide, she saw early on that hard work coupled with excellence in the classroom would be her path to a meaningful career. She drew inspiration from her father's return to school and progression into management at A.E. Staley Manufacturing. Her mother's commitment to continuing education served as another motivational source,



modeling determination as she moved from nursing assistant into information systems work at Decatur Memorial Hospital. Donna later obtained her own bachelor's degree over a ten-year period while working full time. Drawing on these life experiences, she has led an initiative within her current organization to provide six employees with \$10,000 higher education scholarships each year.

Donna has secured National Institute for Health (NIH) backing to create a research and learning facility in Chicago's disadvantaged Englewood community. The campus will offer comprehensive services including dentistry, optometry, behavioral health and counseling, a pharmacy, and community space for educational meetings and activities. This is one of the first centers of its kind; rather than an academic campus, the site is embedded as a central part of the community and emphasized community engagement in its design process. The team of physicians representing different fields will collaborate to deliver care in a way that increases efficiency and eliminates disparity in the care provided to underprivileged patients.

Donna has been named both a Business Leader of Color and one of Chicago's Most Influential Women. In recognition of her work to date, she has been selected by the Robert Wood Johnson Nurse Executive Fellowship and the CEO Perspectives Fellows Program through the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University. These highly selective programs further equip executives to spark transformation in their respective fields.

ROBERT R. CLEAVE

*MacArthur High School,
Class of 1981*

**CO-FOUNDER AND
HEAD OF BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT, NEWSPACE
NETWORKS**

Bob Cleave (MacArthur - 1981) departed Decatur to pursue higher education at Arizona State University (Areospace Engineering) and the University of Southern California (Systems Engineering), and has worked in the space exploration industry since completing his studies.



He has patented a Telestation system utilizing satellite communication networks to provide machine-to-machine services. Bob's services are frequently requested at international conferences and he has served as a technical panel organizer for Military Satellite Communications (MILSATCOM). He participated in strategic planning for XTAR, LLC, a joint international venture providing satellite communication services. He is Co-Founder and board member for the Hosted Payload Alliance and sits on the board for Mavericks Surf Ventures. From 1987 to 1994 he worked within the Systems Engineering for Rockwell International's satellite programs, where he was the company's youngest chief systems engineer and created an innovative public-private partnership with NASA's jet propulsion Laboratory. He was presented with professional achievement awards from NASA in 1992 and 1993, and subsequently worked with with Space

Systems/Loral through 2001. He has been in Business Development with Lockheed Martin for the past decade, publishing regularly in professional journals on engineering, science and business, and was named president of Lockheed Martin Commercial Launch Services in 2012. The company cites his experience over a 25-year period as key preparation for his leadership role. Prior to assuming his current position, he oversaw more than \$1.5 billion in annual sales within various satellite communication networks. Lockheed Martin employs 123,000 people in the global security and aerospace industry.

Outside his field, Bob has been recognized with two Presidential Volunteer Awards (2010 and 2011), the latter for a sustainable energy project to install solar arrays for the high school and junior high in Half Moon Bay, CA. He crafted acquisition strategy, solicited and evaluated bids, secured school board approvals, and negotiated a Power Purchase Agreement with Solar City for two separate grids. The financial savings have supported teaching positions and discretionary expenses.

Since his recognition as an Outstanding Alum, Bob has served as VP, President, and Chairman of the Board at Lockheed Martin; C.E.O and Director of the Stealth Mode network efficiency startup; Vector Launch, Inc. VP and Chief Revenue Officer; Mercure Global Member and Strategic Technology Advisor; ABL Space Systems Advisor; and Co-Founder/Head of Business Development for NewSpace Networks.



RICHARD P. MAXWELL

*MacArthur High School,
Class of 1964*

AEROSPACE ENGINEER

Decatur’s high schools have produced an impressive list of graduates over time. For sheer depth, though, the MacArthur Class of 1964 can go toe-to-toe with any other year from any other school.

Consider that our honoree, Dick Maxwell, is a person credited for – among many other professional distinctions – his leadership within the COSTAR team, which created an instrument to repair the Hubble Telescope. Yet in that same graduating cohort were classmates Richard Adams (associated with the “Star Wars” Strategic Defense Initiative during Ronald Reagan’s administration); a widely respected artist (Steve Spangler) and noted educator (Kitty Lindsay); and Jim Lewis, a major researcher in digital magnetic storage. Other prominent members, such as Student Council President Doug Hagen, served in the armed forces in Vietnam. Doug received the Congressional Medal of Honor and is also honored, posthumously, tonight. ’64 remains a closely-knit class, with many members still in frequent contact.

“We put eye glasses on it,” Dick laughs, brushing off his team’s work on the Hubble as though it were a simple job. “When it’s focused at such a great distance, even a small error can throw everything off.”

That project might carry the most name recognition on his resume, but other public endeavors jump off the page as well. His flight support for the Navy Blue Angels and Air Force Thunderbirds Demonstration Team are two. Non-public (classified) assignments with the Department of Defense punctuated a career as a leader in his field; he is a senior member of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA), for which he served six years on the Design Engineering Technical Committee.

After lettering in football and wrestling and participating in MacArthur’s band, Dick pulled duty as a lifeguard at Nelson Park Beach the summer after graduation. His academic achievements earned him an alternate nomination for appointment at the Naval Academy in Annapolis. Instead he pursued an Aerospace Engineering Degree from the University of Illinois, then went on to study law at St. Louis University and religion at Liberty University.

After marrying Karen Garner he embarked on a career at Ball Aerospace & Technologies. For 33 years he managed, trained and mentored engineering teams that developed advances in mechanical, aeronautical and astronautical applications. His expertise guided



groups focused on mechanical assemblies used in space. His work with the Blue Angels and Thunderbirds occurred during a six-year stint with the McDonnell-Douglas Corporation

During 47 years of marriage, the Maxwells raised five children and now enjoy time with 11 grandchildren. Away from work he has devoted time to coaching basketball, football, soccer, baseball, and softball. Dick’s varied life experiences are reflected in the diversity of his retirement interests: traveling, fishing, family genealogy, history and the biographies of historical figures.

Dick Maxwell’s biography is noteworthy in its own right. We’re proud to recognize him as an Outstanding Alum of the Decatur Public Schools, and also as a representative of 1964’s remarkable graduating class.

LOREN DOUGLAS HAGEN

*MacArthur High School,
Class of 1964*

Beloved by peers and the extended MacArthur family, Doug Hagen’s legacy illustrates the strength of the bond between classmates that extends well beyond their formative years.

He enlisted with the 5th Special Forces Group in 1971 to search for his closest friend, Alan Boyer, when Alan was named a Prisoner of War in Vietnam. Described by a Major John Plaster as an “Easygoing, lanky Midwesterner,” Doug was embraced by the men under his leadership in the same fashion as by peers here at home.

The Decatur Public Schools Foundation is proud to share his story this evening, as well as a progress report on what will be a substantial entryway memorial to honor all of the MacArthur graduates who have served in our armed forces. Our Trustees hope that the presentation is meaningful for those who knew Doug, and is a respectful acknowledgment of his sacrifice and that of classmates Alan Boyer, Michael Elben and Michael Kelley.



THE FOLLOWING CITATION WAS ISSUED WITH DOUG’S CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR:

1st Lt. Hagen distinguished himself in action while serving as the team leader of a small reconnaissance team operating deep within enemy-held territory. At approximately 0630 hours on the morning of 7 August 1971 the small team came under a fierce assault by a superior-sized enemy force using heavy small arms, automatic weapons, mortar, and rocket fire. 1st Lt. Hagen immediately began returning small-arms fire upon the attackers and successfully led this team in repelling the first enemy onslaught. He then quickly deployed his men into more strategic defense locations before the enemy struck again in an attempt to overrun and annihilate the beleaguered team's members. 1st Lt. Hagen repeatedly exposed himself to- the enemy fire directed at him as he constantly moved about the team's perimeter, directing fire, rallying the members, and resupplying the team with ammunition, while courageously returning small arms and hand grenade fire in a valorous attempt to repel the advancing enemy force. The courageous actions and expert leadership abilities of 1st Lt. Hagen were a great source of inspiration and instilled confidence in the team members. After observing an enemy rocket make a direct hit on and destroy one of the team's bunkers, 1st Lt. Hagen moved toward the wrecked bunker in search for team members despite the fact that the enemy force now controlled the bunker area. With total disregard for his own personal safety, he crawled through the enemy fire while returning small-arms fire upon the enemy force. Undaunted by the enemy rockets and grenades impacting all around him, 1st Lt. Hagen desperately advanced upon the destroyed bunker until he was fatally wounded by enemy small arms and automatic weapons fire. With complete disregard for his personal safety, 1st Lt. Hagen's courageous gallantry, extraordinary heroism, and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty, at the cost of his own life, were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon him and the U.S. Army.

All Gave Some and Some Gave All

The History of the Heartland organization has established a MacArthur High School scholarship in memory of Doug Hagen’s service, sacrifice and special place in the hearts and minds of those who knew him. A full listing of new contributors to this scholarship fund will appear in the next Foundation Report to Donors.

CYNTHIA DEADRICK-WOLFER

*MacArthur High School,
Class of 1973*

22 years ago, Cindy left her position with the Decatur Memorial Hospital Foundation to found her own company. Since that time, her career accomplishments and the causes she supports have been unified by a consistent desire to make Decatur better.

C. Deadrick Development fosters financial gain, recognition, collaboration and celebration for both individuals and organizations. Her approach carries events and initiatives “From original concept to completion.” Several notable community occasions have included Zoorific Evening with Scovill Zoo, Millikin University Excellence in Entrepreneurship banquets, James Millikin Homestead fundraisers and Governor Rauner’s Inaugural Event.

Her joint business ventures (Events Plus and Shop on Main) are successful in their own right, but Cindy’s most celebrated accomplishments encompass the two themes that most define her activities – a philanthropic element, and absolute economic benefits for the community.

Come Together – Let’s Walk

was born in 2010, a wholly local event raising funds and awareness to fight breast, ovarian and cervical cancers. Originally tied to the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure, local organizers worked together to redefine the event and keep funds raised in Decatur, rather than channeling dollars raised here to be allocated elsewhere. Cindy worked with volunteers, existing race sponsors and both local hospitals to create a new event, with 100% all the proceeds to meet the needs of women in our community.

The Decatur-Forsyth Classic is a top-flight developmental golf tournament for women vying to join the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA). Cindy joined the Classic in 1985, its second year of existence, and has remained a fixture of the event ever since. As a member of the Junior Welfare Association, she positioned the group as the tournament’s lead organization for a number of years. Even when the loss of the event’s primary sponsor threatened Decatur’s ability to host, her volunteer network and organizational leadership secured an extended contract through new sponsorship. It remains the longest-running golf tournament on the Road to the LPGA tour, and is a tremendous annual boost to the local economy and the community’s national profile.



A sampling of Cindy’s other professional and charitable endeavors include involvement with Grow Decatur, the Decatur Park Board (of which she served as Commissioner from 2002 to 2014), the Children’s Museum of Illinois, the Chamber of Commerce, the Millikin Alumni Board of Directors, the YWCA Board, the Shemamo Girl Scout Council, the Wear to Work non-profit organization, Downtown Decatur Council, the Civic Center Authority, the Decatur Leadership Institute, Gallery 510, Workforce Investment Solutions and America Reads.

Above all else, Cindy has demonstrated a desire to make her hometown the best it can be. Her involvement in so many aspects of community life aptly illustrates this determination.

DAWN (MORVILLE) JOHNSON

*Stephen Decatur High School,
Class of 1979*

**GREENSFELDER,
HEMKER & GALE, P.C.**

Dawn Johnson’s name remains familiar to many locals from her seven years as a staff writer at The Herald & Review. She then earned a law degree from the Washington University School of Law exactly ten years after her undergraduate commencement at Eastern Illinois – a non-traditional grad student who had the resolve to reinvent herself after a successful stint on an earlier career path.

Since relocating to St. Louis, Dawn has extended this commitment to lifelong learning. She currently leads her 165-person law firm’s Franchise & Distribution Industry Group, which represents domestic and international clients from startups to major brand name companies. She also has extensive experience in managing and conducting electronic discovery



within complex litigation. In 2005 she argued what was believed to be the first case regarding electronic discovery before the Missouri Supreme Court.

Drawing on her journalistic experience, Dawn has served for more than 15 years as an editorial board member for the St. Louis Lawyer. She is frequently published in professional journals and is a sought-after presenter at conferences across the country. She worked on a class action lawsuit to bring about change in the medical treatment of prisoners, and previously interned for the Student Press Law Center to advise young journalists about their rights and responsibilities under the First Amendment.

Dawn’s professional résumé is impressive, but her personal pursuits are what make her a figure for current students to emulate. Nominator George Owrey has known her since she served as a class officer and editor of the school newspaper.

“Dawn has been a role model for others for most of her life,” Owrey says, “inspiring others to achieve their potential through hard work and perseverance.”

A significant moment for Dawn arrived with the death of her brother when both were in their 20’s. Recognizing that children left behind are often forgotten mourners, she founded a group for bereaved siblings, writing and presenting on the topic as a

National Director for The Compassionate Friends network of programs. During her newspaper years in Decatur she also formed a mentoring bond with a young person who still remains her “sister,” a student who became the first person in the family to graduate from high school and is now a Certified Nursing Assistant.

Dawn’s community involvement with the FOCUS Leadership program and College Summit solidified a passion for improving educational opportunities for underprivileged children. The latter is a national non-profit organization dedicated to helping low-income high school students find a path to higher education. She serves as Vice Chair of the Board and on the fund development committee, working closely with the St. Louis Public Schools. Additional non-profit volunteer work has encompassed Gateway Legal Services (helping disabled people turned down for Social Security benefits), Big Brothers Big Sisters, the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, Project Angel Tree, and Legal Services of Eastern Missouri, which represents low-income clients in housing disputes.



B.O.L.D. PROGRESSION

District 61 is immersed in executing a B.O.L.D. facilities plan (Building better Opportunities for Learning in Decatur) to maximize the function and efficiency of our buildings. This process includes a mix of renovation, new construction and combining existing schools to concentrate resources that provide the best possible learning environment for students.

JOHNS HILL ART AS DAILY LIFE

Construction of an entirely new Johns Hill Magnet School begins in the Spring of 2020, with Arts-integrated classes slated to commence in the Fall of 2021. Students in the current building will have a first-hand view of the process as it unfolds. The campus will incorporate outdoor instructional and recreational space, expanding capacity to welcome additional students in the surrounding neighborhoods to join the existing population enrolled through the annual magnet process.

The Decatur Public Schools Foundation remains committed to providing resources that enhance the experience for students at Johns Hill, which includes an extensive ESL (English as a Second Language) program serving families who speak more than 20 different languages and dialects at home. In addition to a contingent of Spanish speakers, other more surprising examples include Arabic, Farsi, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Hindi, Telugu, Tagalog, Tamil, Urdu, Taiwanese and Somali.

The school's emphasis on inclusion creates a nurturing environment for this incredibly diverse learning community.





ARTS INTEGRATION

Arts Integration refers to the immersion of the visual and performing arts into every aspect of instruction. Johns Hill Magnet School has traditionally placed a heavy emphasis on the Arts, so integrating this approach into daily activities is a natural fit.

Visual Arts teacher Kathy Ganley worked on the team to organize professional development for fellow faculty members.

“Working as a group to engage every teacher in every subject area is so vital,” she says. “Every subject area can be taught more fully by integrating the arts into how we relay information.”

For example, students examining a certain historical event retain the details more fully by immersing themselves in a play they’ve written and staged themselves. This creates an atmosphere for active learning, rather than the passive reception of information by memorizing names and dates.



A key to implementing the approach with fidelity to its principles requires strategic professional development. Several Foundation-funded visits from Arts Integration specialist Stuart Stotts helped to ingrain best practices for Johns Hill faculty members across the full spectrum of subject areas.

As a new \$31 million Johns Hill building was designed, planners incorporated student and teacher voices to place an emphasis on creating spaces conducive to the integration of the Arts throughout the campus. The new building will also permit enrollment for additional students with a special interest in these areas.



“Understanding Arts Integration provides endless opportunities for students, staff and families to grow together.”

– Sharon Bird





SARAH ELIZABETH IPPEL

*Eisenhower High School,
Class of 1998*

Sarah Elizabeth Ippel is founder and Executive Director of the Academy for Global Citizenship (AGC), a Chicago Public Elementary School in an underserved area of the city’s southwest side. She established the Academy at age 23, after three attempts to earn approval from the Chicago Public Schools Board of Education.

“One person straight up called me crazy,” she remembers.

Her mother, Linda, laughs recalling what she thought when told of her daughter’s ambition.

“A SCHOOL?” I thought. “Who is this kid to think she can start a school? How do you even DO that? For me, that would be like saying Hey – you know what a house looks like. Now go and build one.”

Turns out, the way you do it is the way that anything worthwhile gets built. You start. There’s not always a blueprint. And Sarah Elizabeth set out to build a school that looked different than any other she’d seen.

Her own educational experiences varied widely, preparing her – perhaps uniquely – to grasp the challenges inherent to 21st-Century public education. Much of her primary and secondary education in Michigan took place in an essentially private school environment. The life situations for students around her were all fairly similar and largely secure. A family move to Decatur and enrollment at Eisenhower introduced her to peers who faced more challenges than she’d encountered before, representing a jarring change of scenery.

“It was a shock to her,” Linda remembers. “She was 16. She was not happy to be moving. She had never seen the kinds of things she experienced when we moved here. She saw students from tough backgrounds. She saw racial tension. It was all eye-opening for her to occupy this new environment.”

Such diverse settings were formative in establishing her outlook on education. Its fundamental structure, she determined, looks a lot like it did in the 1950’s, focused on rote facts rather than equipping students to understand others and comprehend a larger picture. Unless provided a lens to do so, human beings have a hard time discerning the world outside their present reality. On top of it, teachers face a daunting task, forced to teach towards standardized academic testing while also trying to meet the complex social, emotional and developmental needs with which they are presented.

All this mentally churned as she departed for Trinity College (University of Cambridge – United Kingdom). Extensive travel, observation and inquiry gradually provided a new perspective on how to promote change.

“I rode a bike, a camel, a boat, a rickshaw,” she says, discovering how children across the world are educated.

Those travels have taken Sarah Elizabeth to more than a hundred nations to observe educational philosophies that inform the AGC’s design and culture. Its four pillars include Academic Rigor, Parent Engagement, Whole-Student Education, and International-Mindedness. The school also places an emphasis on environmental sustainability and green initiatives, reminding students daily that they are a part of the global community.

Sarah Elizabeth served five years on the governing board of the United Nations Association. She has also held seats on the U.S. Council Green Schools Advocacy Committee, Chicago Public Schools Environmental Action Plan Taskforce, and executive boards for both Northwestern Memorial Hospital and the Art Institute of Chicago.

agcchicago.org



MONTESSORI ACADEMY FOR PEACE

In the fall of 2020, the former Garfield and Enterprise Montessori buildings combined to form a new Montessori Academy for Peace on the campus of the former Thomas Jefferson Middle School.

Already offering downstate’s only two free public Montessori sites, this completely renovated facility will mean that the District 61 offers the largest public Montessori program in the nation.

Montessori methodology focuses on personal accountability, independent learning, and peer-to-peer collaboration between students from multiple grade levels working side by side. Individualized instructional plans empower students to engage in active learning, in an atmosphere that fosters an understanding of where students fit in the larger world.

“A large piece of the Montessori pedagogy involves being outside within nature.”

- Jami Hallam



The Foundation has supported a heavy emphasis on outdoor Montessori activities.

Notable events in the past year have included the planting of a 20-tree orchard sponsored by Rotary 180; establishment of a pollinator plot in cooperation with French STEM Academy (across the road from beehives managed with the Andreas Ag Academy); and construction of a sensory garden incorporating plants selected for scent, sound, taste and touch. The latter was conceived to engage students with varied disabilities alongside those working in the raised garden beds and 4-H project plantings.

Strong parent and teacher leadership has led the effort to raise private funds to support facility development at the new Montessori campus. Over the past two years the group has generated \$326,903 to contribute to outdoor recreation and instructional spaces.

“A large piece of the Montessori pedagogy involves being outside within nature,” says program advocate Jami Hallam, whose son Logan attended Garfield Montessori. Hallam has worked alongside faculty and fellow parents to raise private funds beyond the renovation budget. “The outdoor environment at this new campus is under construction and looks beautiful. There are musical and creative enrichment components in addition to space that encourages active play. The financial support of community donors has been impressive. Many have been willing to support us with our initial request, then invited us back to provide additional gifts.

Planning for the next phase of development includes concepts for a greenhouse, raised bed gardens, poultry and selected elements imported for replication from the Enterprise Living Science Farm. An event barn incorporating a farm market, greenhouse and poultry housing will be raised on the new campus in Spring 2021, financed entirely by private contributions to the Foundation.

(FORMERLY)

FRENCH STEM ACADEMY

As part of the B.O.L.D. realignment, French STEM Academy will transition from its current downtown site to set up shop at the District’s developing Living Science Farm.

“We are extremely excited to get started at the new building,” says Principal Julie Fane. “There are so many opportunities to expand what our students and teachers are doing to incorporate hands-on science.”

The transition to “outdoor learning lab” is both logical and organic – a round peg fitting perfectly into place. The Foundation has funded a formal training process to cement French as a certified STEM-focused school. Faculty, administrators and instructional coaches engaged in a rigorous professional development process to incorporate best practices for an integrated focus on the sciences. Teachers such as Cathy Jones, who has a particular expertise in horticulture, will have a much broader canvas on which to paint.

“This will be an incredible process for our students and teachers,” Cathy says. “To have such great support provides a lot of energy to our staff and students.”

With an eye on their future, students have re-named their new home **American Dreamers STEM Academy**.

An example of the community’s direct commitment is a \$5,000 gift from Bruce and Kay Nims. Their contribution has funded an indoor STEM learning center organized by Cathy and collaborators at the new building. This resource will promote hands-on activities all year long, enhancing instruction even when the weather is uncooperative for outdoor pursuits.

“It’s hard to express how encouraging it is to see so many people investing in our students,” Julie says.

DENNIS LAB SCHOOL

Due to the immense popularity of this West End site, Dennis Lab School is expanding to add capacity by incorporating the former French Academy building as a second site. This creative solution will permit a significant influx of new families to join in on the neighborhood school concept.

“We don’t want to lose the sense of community by creating a separation between students,” says Assistant Principal Keith Creighton. “So we’ve structured it to place some younger age groups and some older kids at each building. There will be more connectivity between the two sites than if we just assigned one to early grades and another to the upper levels. Our students at all ages will feel a connection to both places, and maintain that bond with one another.

If you don’t account for that, you risk losing the positive culture we’ve created.”

The school has enjoyed a close relationship with Millikin University, and its approach has proven successful for a number of reasons.

Raphaella Prange, Vice President for Student Affairs/Dean of Students at Millikin University, is also a Dennis parent, and assists the DPS Foundation to review Dennis Lab School funding requests from teachers. They apply for support from a designated Dennis Fund generated by the Parent Co-Op and neighborhood donors.

“Dennis Lab School has provided a rich atmosphere for project based learning, which is a student driven, collaborative, and sometimes messy process,” Raphaella explains. “Our students come away with experiences that prepare them for not only higher education, but the workplace as well. They learn to navigate networks across the building, whether that be with visiting experts from Millikin and the community, administrators, teachers, or peers.”

She feels that the B.O.L.D. plan has taken nuances of this project based learning approach into account with the dual-campus model.

“Providing adequate space for collaborative learning will allow this approach to fully blossom. It will offer teaching and learning spaces tailored to project-based learning at each grade level. The new campuses will be lively and open communities where students will be able to showcase their projects, products, and learning and truly demonstrate learning outcomes.”

Because Dennis Lab School has developed a significant pool of committed donors, dollars provided by other outside funders can be concentrated to support grant programming at other buildings. Ultimately, the objective is to establish similar building-specific funds at each school in the District.



STEPHEN DECATUR MIDDLE SCHOOL ACADEMIES

In August 2019 students from both middle school campuses came together at Stephen Decatur Middle School. 7th and 8th graders have the option to self-select into one of three learning academies: Agriculture; Public Service; and STEAM (STEM focus, also incorporating the Arts).

The process of combining two large student populations poses challenges as students adapt; faculty and administrators have worked to organize a Year 2 that will incorporate expanding elements associated with each of these thematic learning strands.

Ultimately, beginning the conversation at an earlier age will carry students into the most meaningful coursework once they reach high school. Students with a special interest in Agriculture will feed up into the high school Dwayne O. Andreas Ag Academy (see page 20). Those who participate in the Public Service area will progress naturally up to the Jerry J. Dawson Civic Leadership Institute (page 28).

Over the past three years, corporate partner Wells Fargo has provided \$45,000 to enhance enrichment programming, with a specific focus on career development at the middle school grade levels.

“It’s important for teachers to have the resources to provide a great experience for our kids,” says Wells Fargo Advisors Branch Manager John Weber, an Eisenhower High School grad who serves as Treasurer for the Decatur Public Schools Foundation. “We need to do whatever we can to make sure students identify areas of interest and understand how important it is to go through school with a vision for their future in mind.”

Special efforts for 2021 include the incorporation of Operation Calculus (see page 36) and STEM Success enrichment, as well as a Civics Club organized through the Jerry J. Dawson Civic Leadership Institute (see page 28)



The Bob Jones Music Fund

Bob (Robert L.) Jones was a 1946 graduate of Stephen Decatur High School, having attended Washington grade school and Johns Hill Junior High. A lifelong love of music grew from playing middle school clarinet, then advancing to the high school Redcoats Marching Band. While still in high school, Bob played professionally with the locally-acclaimed Bill Oetzel Orchestra, a jazz dance band. The Korean War saw Bob stationed at Fort Riley Kansas, where he played sax as a proud member of the United States Army 10th Division Band.

From junior high onward, Bob’s best friends were often bandmates. Music expanded his world to people, places and experiences that shaped his perspective, giving him both great joy and a way to express his love of life. Friends and loved ones attest that Bob’s deepest sense of fulfillment came from “passing it on” so that others could learn to love music as he did. The Bob Jones Music Fund has benefited hundreds of students over more than a decade. Since inception, it has provided nearly \$90,000 to sponsor music programming in the Decatur Public Schools.

“It would thrill Bob to see the impact of our investment in the public schools,” says Nancy Grandys-Jones, who now lives in Denver and established the fund to honor her husband’s memory. “It gives me a great deal of gratification to be able to maintain his connection to Decatur.”

THE ARTS IN ACTION

THE BOB JONES MUSIC FUND HAS PROVIDED A WIDE RANGE OF MUSICAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, INCLUDING:

- College scholarships
- Instrument Library purchases and repairs
- Private Lessons provided by the Millikin University Preparatory Department
- Band Camp Scholarships in cooperation with the Symphony Guild
- Eisenhower High School Musicals (Tarzan; Once On This Island; The Drowsy Chaperone and Oklahoma!)
- Classroom Music composition sessions
- Music and Movement Elementary Concert series
- Game Plan Music Curriculum materials
- Virtual Family concert sessions* with “The Awesome Squad”
**A special socially-distant approach in tune with online learning*

ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTORS TO SUPPORT BOB JONES MUSIC FUND ACTIVITIES INCLUDE:

Karen Bogner	Lori Kotlowski
JoAnn Grandys	Theresa Kotlowski
Allyson Kotlowski	Deb Sattler

THE KISTLER-SCOTT FUND FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

Eisenhower High School

Mrs. Shirley Kistler and Mr. Milton Scott both gave over 30 years of their lives to the Decatur Public Schools, beginning in August of 1967. From the outset, Shirley and Milt forged a partnership that impacted thousands of students and generations of families at Eisenhower High School (EHS).

Shirley, a graduate of Eisenhower, returned to her alma mater upon graduation from Illinois State University in 1965. During her tenure at EHS she taught English, speech and acting. She holds a bachelor’s degree in speech and theatre, as well as a master’s degree in counseling. She retired from the Decatur Public Schools in 2001.

Milton holds a Bachelor of Music degree from Millikin University and a Master of Music in Choral Conducting from Illinois State University. He retired from Eisenhower High School in 2000, where he was choral director as well as music department chair.

Shirley and Milt were responsible for three decades of drama and musical productions in this building. Following retirement, they have both remained active in the community and within our schools. Most notably, Shirley served on the Decatur Public Schools Foundation Board of Directors and as Master of Ceremonies for



the Decatur Municipal Band. Milt serves as founder and director of the Opus 24 choral ensemble as well as Minister of Music at First Lutheran Church. Many of his former EHS students have had the honor of singing with the Opus chorus.

For the length of their tenure together, Shirley and Milt maintained a remarkable standard of excellence, developing character in their students and supporting them through remarkable achievements in the performing arts. It is our intent to ensure that future generations of teachers, students and families recognize and draw inspiration from their professional careers. We honor that legacy by dedicating the performing arts wing at Eisenhower High School as the Kistler-Scott Center for the Performing Arts.

THANK YOU BOTH for all that you have done to enrich the lives of our students and community! The Foundation is also proud to honor your service by establishing the new Kistler-Scott Fund for the Performing Arts. Gifts to this designated fund will underwrite musical and theatrical endeavors for many years to come.

MacArthur High School’s Culbertson-Waller Fund for the Performing Arts is likewise geared to support activities across kinetic disciplines. Named for instrumental teacher Jim Culbertson and theatre instructor Tim Waller, the fund is in a growth phase and continues to identify interested donors.

GEORGE PINNEY

*Eisenhower High School,
Class of 1970*

George Pinney’s career in the performing arts can’t be boiled down to a black and white curriculum vitae. But given the scope, it’s tempting to try.

George has directed, choreographed, produced and performed in more than 200 stage shows, running the gamut from You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown to La Traviata. He can also claim countless publications, seminars, workshops and professional honors. He won a Primetime Emmy for outstanding choreography of blast (2001), a Tony nomination and several Broadway on Tour recognitions.

Nominator Milt Scott recalls his initial experience with our winner, working alongside him on Brigadoon, and remembers that the show only came to life when George walked through the door.

“Mrs. Kistler and I were in a whirling dervish trying to figure out who could choreograph the show. She came up with Eisenhower alum George Pinney, a person I did not yet know. When he arrived, the show took shape. We knew then that George would have a promising career in theater and dance.”



(Never one to leave a pun at rest, Milt adds: “What a BLAST to have him here...”)

His influence on others most truly tells the tale. While at I.U. George has been instrumental in the direction of both undergraduate and masters programming, guiding the development of an individualized major program for musical theatre. He has been a recipient of the Herman Lieber Award for Excellence in Teaching. Most tellingly, students under his direct tutelage have enjoyed significant professional success.

39 Music Theatre Alums who studied under George can claim between them 40 Broadway credits and 29 national tours, as well as numerous television and film appearances.

Familiar shows include Broadway productions of Mamma Mia, Miss Saigon, Cats, Show Boat, Beauty and the Beast, Les Misérables, South Pacific, The Lion King, Big River, Wicked,

The Producers, Hair, A Tale of Two Cities, Spiderman, MOTOWN the Musical and Jersey Boys. Television and production roles for his protégés include Two and a Half Men, Orange is the New Black, ER, Frasier, Star Trek: Voyager, Ally McBeal, Law & Order and Malcolm in the Middle.

In life as in art, George’s engagement with the world encounters both the beautiful and heartbreaking. Years of community involvement have encompassed consistent work with Alzheimer’s patients at the Meadowood Health Pavilion. He and his students develop musicals with the express purpose of putting smiles on faces that have forgotten how. Each of the last ten years he has choreographed An Aids Benefit: a dance of love for the South Central Community Health Center. For many years he has also served as the national Musical Theater Chair for the Society of Arts and Letters, a philanthropic organization that awards significant financial support to seed the careers of young artists.



AWESOME SQUAD

Millikin University grads Michael Scherer and Zach Garrett are Decatur-based professional musicians. Seasoned songwriters, performers, and recording artists, they’ve also consulted for national seminars that explore how music educators deliver instruction. Operating as partners in DreamVizion Productions, they engage kids as The Awesome Squad, offering a District students a glimpse into the music industry.

Their “Music in the Classroom” rhythm and songwriting sessions promote critical thinking and creativity, encouraging social cooperation in both large and small groups. The Squad also provides interactive whole-school assemblies with motivational messaging for Pre-K to 3rd grade students.

As with most instructional areas, Covid-19 has thrown a wrench in performing arts programming for 2020. Marie Jagger-Taylor,

the District 61 Arts Education Specialist, spent time on Broadway and served a lengthy tenure as Director of the Decatur Park District’s Best of Summer Stock (B.O.S.S.) theater program. Her ingrained Show Must Go On mindset has guided a pivot from in-school Awesome Squad sessions to a virtual engagement format. She seized on the fact that online learning has accustomed families to Google Meet and Facebook Live platforms.

Sessions ran on Thursdays throughout October and November. For the first show, 681 families logged in to participate in a live performance broadcast from the downtown Madden Center for the Arts. By the following day, the archived show had engaged more than 1,400 households with multiple students, siblings and parents in each.

“It’s impressive how educators have used creative problem-solving methods to continue delivering quality learning experiences,” says performing arts supporter Nancy Grandys-Jones, patron of the Bob Jones Music Fund. “It’s amazing to see it happen even under the most challenging circumstances.”

The first seven shows garnered 8,838 views, with additional viewership for the archived sessions.

“The Awesome Squad promoted healthy living for the students in an upbeat and motivational way. All of the children loved the visit! They all sang, danced, jumped, and shouted the entire 45 minutes. It was one of the best shows that I have seen in a long time.”

- Carrie Hogue
Principal, Muffley Elementary

When pandemic restrictions begin to relax, music coordinators hope to add a live component where families are able to visit the Decatur Area Arts Council facilities to participate. In the meantime, partners such as the Awesome Squad continue to refine new creative connections to young people.

THANK YOU TO THE FRIENDS WHO HAVE SUPPORTED ALL MUSICAL PROGRAMMING IN OUR BUILDINGS! AWESOME SQUAD FUNDING HAS BEEN PROVIDED BY:

The Amherst Hardy Foundation, the Erv and Linda Arends Fund for the Arts and Trades, the TS and Juanita Ballance Foundation, and the John Ullrich Foundation

Visit Michael and Zach at:
theawesomesquad.net

INSTRUMENT LIBRARY

For well over a decade, the **Millikin-Decatur Symphony Orchestra Guild** (MDSOG) has directly invested in Decatur Public School students by providing hundreds of young musicians with quality band and orchestra instruments.

Purchasing or renting an instrument from traditional music shops is cost-prohibitive for many families. The Guild has stepped in to ensure that kids can participate no matter their parents’ financial situation.

“It’s so important to provide EVERY student with the chance to take part in formal music programming,” says former MDSOG Education Chair Dee Keller. “Unfortunately, that’s tough to do if you don’t have significant dollars to invest in an instrument. This is why the Guild feels this is such a vital initiative to support.”

Dee, fellow Guild member and former Education Committee Chair **Carol Suddeth**, and **Jim Kramer** (formerly of Thompson Kramer Music prior to retirement) have contributed countless volunteer hours and expertise to managing the program. Every instrument requires tracking by serial number, accurate record-keeping relative to student assignments, and efficient cleaning and repair on an annual basis. These and other individuals work alongside music faculty such as instructor **Ben West** (Montessori Academy for Peace) and **Jennifer Morrow** (Eisenhower) to ensure that all of it runs smoothly.

“It’s a lot to keep track of,” says Carol. “Ben

does a great job, and we have a big task to manage everything to serve the students efficiently. It takes a whole team and teachers who are willing to go the extra mile for their kids.”

Nurtured by retired District 61 music coordinator **Marilyn Mertz**, the MDSOG has provided more than **\$60,000** towards the purchase and maintenance of instruments since the library’s inception. The Guild’s prominent support has been augmented by financial contributions from other groups such as the **Juvae Jazz Society**, private family supporters such as the **Amherst Hardy Fund**, and organizations such as the **Alpha Sigma Iota** alumni organization. (Thank you also to **Mike Jontry** and **Patti Barr** for your organization of these latter two gifts.)

“This is such an important effort for all grade levels,” Ben says, “especially the early ones. “Without the Instrument Library, a number of our elementary buildings probably wouldn’t be able to put together ensembles.”

Dozens of community supporters have donated gently-used instruments to the library’s loaner roster. If you have a quality instrument that fits the bill, our partners at the Guild can make certain it reaches a student in need of your thoughtfulness! Please contact the MDSOG through the **Madden Arts Center** office at (217) 423-3189 for information on how to contribute and instrument to the library.

ARTISTS AT WORK

Eisenhower High School’s **Silkscreen Printing Program** exemplifies an idea shifting shape as it comes to life. Art teacher **David Barista** first envisioned acquiring some additional printing equipment, but his efforts have grown to encompass other student groups and

entrepreneurial efforts beyond what he initially planned.

“It’s fun to see new ideas emerge from the original concept,” David says. “Our kids have all these projects they want to explore. The great thing is helping them find their way and providing the materials they need to be creative.”

His original proposal pitched for the purchase of silk-screen printing supplies and presses. He envisioned an after-school organization of sorts, something akin to a Yearbook Club. But it soon became apparent that kids in all his classes had an interest.

Since that request last year, his effort has expanded to incorporate student ideas for one-run designs and shirts tied to specific school events. It has even had a positive ripple effect for outside groups like the **Warrior Project**, a program founded by a student with Cerebral Palsy, **Terrel Williams**, to facilitate dialogue between students with special needs and other Eisenhower classmates. David and his students are working with Social Worker **Ty Douglass** to produce Warrior Project tee-shirts, which will in turn be displayed for sale at **The ArtFarm** gallery shop downtown. Proceeds will benefit student activities organized by the student Warriors.

Foundation Trustee **Nikki Garry**, who created and operates the **Your Money Matters** financial literacy program, is an experienced accountant who has worked for agricultural corporations like ADM and GSI. She is also a proud MacArthur General and Millikin Big Blue graduate, and has followed the Screen Printing program closely.

“It’s funny. I speak Accountant and David speaks Artist,” Nikki explains. “At first I wasn’t sure how all of this would work. But after spending time with him I see the vision now. He’s done a great job with it, and I understand his thought process.”

Personal engagement in building-level programs is a gratifying aspect of service on the Foundation Board of Trustees. At a granular level, this represents the community’s direct encouragement of teachers committed to creative programs.

CLOSE UP WASHINGTON

Other donors share this desire to contribute to student success in unique ways. Donors who contribute to honor the memory of the late educator **Mike Rusk** support an award in his name, as well as the **Close Up Washington** program that helps sponsor Eisenhower students to visit Washington, D.C.

“It’s important for friends to know that their dollars go to activities Mike felt were important,” says Mike’s wife, **Becky**. Their family hosts a golf outing each summer to generate support for the fund.

For a number of years, Eisenhower High School students made annual expeditions to the nation’s capital. Structured by Close Up Washington, D.C. – the nation’s largest non-profit, non-partisan citizenship education organization – the experience meant much more than sightseeing. A regimented schedule transforms the city into a living, breathing classroom, with supporting materials tied to Advanced Placement Government curriculum prior to the visit.

Former teacher **Mike Rusk** played an instrumental role in organizing and leading the trips for many years. He also established the **Close Up Washington Fund** to assist students who have a difficult time securing independent financial support. During a recent trip, his designated fund helped 14 Eisenhower seniors to revive the formerly dormant tradition.



“I don’t know if this trip would have happened without it,” says organizer **Sam Mills**, Department Chair of Social Studies at Eisenhower.

Students visited government offices, the Supreme Court and landmarks such as the Lincoln Memorial. They also participated in active policy discussions and workgroups addressing specific issues, such as how to make college enrollment more affordable. Perhaps the strongest impression left with the group was a sense that our nation’s vast diversity is one of its great strengths.

“I loved all the monuments and stuff,” says past participant **Kara Berk**. “But what will stick with me is meeting people from all over, learning about their political views and what they have to say.”

This is the sort of response the fund’s founder would have appreciated. Mike

passed away several months after the students returned, but appreciated the fact that the tradition has taken on new life. The fund he established will remain active to benefit future students in years to come.

“Mr. Rusk was a mentor and dear friend,” says **Megan Glover-Flanigan** (EHS Class of ’97, Close Up Alumna, and current Eisenhower Literacy Specialist). “He continuously demonstrated a commitment to excellence and modeled uncompromising integrity, all with a sharp wit and gentle sincerity. He gave those he encountered a clearer understanding of their own attributes, and always found levity within a given circumstance. He is greatly missed.”

Individuals wishing to contribute to the **Close Up Washington Fund** for either the D.C. trip or the Rusk Scholarship can do so by contacting the Foundation directly at (217) 362-3042 or zshields@dps61.org



TARGETED INVESTMENTS

Many donors target support to the Foundation through gifts with specific parameters in mind.

Dan Brintlinger's family serves as a great example, providing several decades of awards to a graduating senior from each high school going on to a career in the armed forces. Recipients of the yearly **Brintlinger Awards** may use the funds to cover expenses they encounter while transitioning from high school to the service.

"I think it's important to recognize students who are solid citizens and who want to serve their country," Dan says. "This is a way to provide encouragement and to support them as they start off on the next part of their lives."

The Foundation plays a central role in guiding dollars to support efforts important to individuals like **Bud Jackson**, a retired industrial tech teacher who inquired about directing his support to sponsor activities in the rebounding Construction Trades program.

"Students need to know that there are a lot of well-paying jobs out there in the trades," Bud says. "Electricians and carpenters and plumbers make a great living, but we've stopped telling students about them. There's been a message that all kids need to go to college to get a good job. That's just not true for everybody. And with college so expensive now, our students should know about all their options."

Jim Rients made a \$10,000 contribution to the MacArthur Victory Fund to offer a scholarship in memory of his brother, long-time math teacher **Ray Rients**. This gift will honor Ray's legacy every spring for ten years' time. Faculty friends raised the first year's funds themselves in 2019.

The Victory Fund – representing \$63,135 generated by MacArthur parents and other community donors to date – supports teacher projects such as the "Chopped Challenge" food innovation competition, and a Chamber of Commerce Breakfast Networking Group organized by social worker **Kelly TerHark** and her husband **Ty Hildum**, who is a national account manager with

Norfolk Southern Railroad and believes providing contact with the work world is critical to prepare students for life after graduation.

"Getting our mentees up early to the breakfasts helps them understand that you have to be accountable to those around you," Ty says. "And it's vital for them to get over their anxiety about interacting with adults. They're expected to develop soft skills like making good eye contact, and talk about businesses and stand up and introduce themselves to a room full of potential mentors, references and future employers. It's a great experience."

Foundation partners contribute to benefit students across a full spectrum of abilities. Special Education students at MacArthur put on a yearly stage production sponsored by the **Victory Fund**, a chance to step into the spotlight in front of a full house of peers and families.

"It's such an important moment for them," says teacher **Shannen Ray**. "It means a lot not only to be in the show, but to work together and prepare in the months leading up to it. They work together as a team and see the result come together at the end."

SUPPORT FOR STEM & SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY

Numerous corporate and individual donors understand the importance of introducing students to the vast range of careers in the technical and scientific arenas. Many companies and individuals place a heavy priority on support for activities associated with STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math). Some notable examples follow.

DEMYSTIFYING MATH

Since 2014, the **Chicago Mercantile Exchange** has supported efforts to prepare incoming students through the [Pre-Kindergarten Math] program. Over this six-year span, gifts totaling \$690,000 have supported a full-time coordinator, assistants, professional development, family outreach and instructional materials to work with pre-kindergarten and early learning sites feeding into the Decatur Public Schools.

"Working with our early childhood partners has been such a rewarding experience," says Coordinator Theresa Tozer, who has delivered curriculum support and professional development for both District teachers and care providers who are uncertified but have a great deal of time to impact young learners. "We try to demystify math for adults as much as kids," Theresa stresses. "You never hear anybody joke about not being able to read. But people make the *Oh no! Not math!* statements all the time. We try to help everybody who engages with our kids feels capable of teaching fundamental skills and understand the importance of starting instruction at an early age."

She and her colleagues – retired teachers **Kathy Althoff** and **Marla Galka** – have visited learning sites and hosted family-friendly events as well as workshop sessions for numerous early childhood teachers, parents and daycare providers.

STARTING EARLY

Investing in students at the earliest age means they are more prepared to succeed year-by-year thereafter.

Principal Sarah Knuppel oversees District 61 Pre-Kindergarten programming at Pershing Early Learning Center and its satellite sites. She is pleased by the support provided through the Chicago Mercantile Exchange project. She points out that early learners present all kinds of different needs than older kids. For instance: there's a time for learning to sit still, and a time to encourage our littlest learners to spend some of that boundless energy.

"Sometimes they just have to motor," Sarah summarizes.

Kids in the pre-K programs have a chance to on a daily basis at the newly-updated Pershing playground. Thanks first to a Foundation grant, and later to sponsor Jan Roddis, they also enjoy coaching from the Mid-State Soccer Program several times per week each semester.

"We are so fortunate to have a donor like Jan who feels it's important to provide opportunities like this," Sarah says. "She's such a support to our teachers and kids. And something like this, especially – many of our students won't have a chance to take part in soccer unless we make it happen here at school. It's a healthy way to play. We try to create good habits that carry over into all aspects of their lives both here and at home."



SCOTT DAVIDSON

Apple Distinguished Educator

In 1994 Apple created a designation for educators using technology to transform teaching, especially those inspired to support colleagues to re-think what’s possible when integrating new advances. These “ADE” designees hail from 45 countries. Selection for this select group is a professional mark of distinction reserved for fewer than a thousand American teachers and less than 2,500 worldwide.



CRITERIA FOR SELECTION AS AN ADE INCLUDES:

- » Sharing expertise using technology to engage students and teachers in new ways around the world
- » Providing best practices and leadership through published lessons, courses, books, and other media
- » Working together to develop and promote powerful ideas for improving global teaching and learning

Scott Davidson earned Distinguished Educator status in early 2019. The award is only given every other year, and he is one of only a handful in Illinois. At that time he served as Instructional Technology Coordinator for District 61. (He is currently back to teaching and also manages the Supporting STEM Success enrichment program funded by Caterpillar.)

Apple describes honorees this way: “ADEs are experts on the realities of integrating technology into learning environments, and they work closely with Apple to foster innovation in education.”

Scott has embodied this description to the letter, playing a key role in maximizing the effectiveness of one-to-one technology in District 61 classrooms. It’s one thing to provide iPads and MacBooks to every student and teacher; effectively leveraging new technology applications is another. Without this second piece, potential benefits are largely lost.

His collaboration with the Decatur Public Schools Foundation began with a small classroom grant 15 years ago. Numerous other tech, coding and engineering projects followed, as well as the creation of the \$40,000 DPS Technology Education Center, which is located within the Professional Development Institute. But it’s his work providing guidance to peers that represents the most meaningful contribution to the school district. As technology advisor to the Foundation, he vets project proposals and works with teachers to ensure that they maximize assets in support of effective teaching.

“I’m just one of many DPS graduates and teachers who take advantage of the resources and opportunities available in the district,” says Davidson, a 1996 graduate of Eisenhower High School. “Our teachers want to give our students the best learning experiences possible, and are eager to be creative in doing it. I believe the Decatur Public Schools Foundation is one of the single greatest support systems for our educators to explore new possibilities.”



FORGING AHEAD

New initiatives each year highlight how Foundation programming is directly focused to spark student interest in potential careers. Intentionally introducing young women to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) fields broadens their early awareness of options into what have been – at least stereotypically – male-dominated career paths.

Girls Who Code team members at Hope Academy engage in a range of activities geared to explore future job possibilities. Nine Hope Academy 3rd through 5th graders in this pilot year developed a collaborative culture to problem solve and explore developing technologies.

“These girls have formed a sisterhood,” says program organizer Tiara Mackins. “They are learning how planning and persistence are important when creating a goal and seeing it through. Students build leadership skills and have also fundraised independently to go on a group trip to the Field Museum in Chicago.”



ELINE SVEDSEN FUND

Eline Svendsen (1924 - 2010)

Eline Svendsen meant many things to many students during the 46 years she spent in the classroom:

1943-1944
DECATUR HIGH SCHOOL

1945-1947
WOODROW WILSON

1948-1956
ROOSEVELT

1957-1967
DECATUR HIGH SCHOOL

her insight into what each pupil required in order to grasp a certain concept; her kind words of encouragement; her ability to provide life-changing guidance or her firm but gentle expectation that each student should always give their best – these are some of the ways Miss Svendsen endeared herself to students.

Her unwavering commitment to young people serves as a reminder that there are few professions as important as that of an educator.

Former Decatur Mayor and publisher of the Decatur Tribune Paul Osborne writes: “The impact that teachers like Miss Svendsen have on kids is so meaningful that, over a half century later, they are still loved and respected and come into focus anytime that people talk of those who influenced their lives.”

“The sessions that I attended got me excited about math again and inspired me to try some new things. One was titled Teaching Math at a Distance – Math Routines Reimagined for the Remote Classroom. It has been a hard for me to get an immediate sense of students’ understanding as I can’t look at their work in class, but these strategies have opened my mind to how it can be done well online.”

- Hannah Blacketer, MacArthur Math Teacher

Many of Eline’s students went on to enjoy accomplished careers as doctors, engineers, scientists, and mathematicians. Though she retired from the Decatur School District in 1967, Miss Svendsen’s passion for education continued as she went on to teach mathematics at Lakeland College. After retirement from Lakeland, she worked as a tutor at the Sylvan Learning Center. When a family didn’t have resources to pay for the program, she made arrangements to tutor on her own time at no charge.



In honor of her impact on their lives and careers, a circle of former students has established the Memorial Fund.

Founding Committee Members:

PHIL BENNER
ROBERT DAWSON
BRAD FERGUSON
ROD LORENZ
RICHARD SCHAAR
FRANK WILLIAMS

ELINE SVENDSEN MEMORIAL FUND

Its goal is to provide students in the Decatur Public School District 61 the same opportunity for superior and devoted teaching that many experienced in her classroom. Grants provided by the Fund afford current faculty with the opportunity to enrich and enhance their teaching skills. Among other activities, steering committee members have invested in teachers by sending them to annual conferences hosted by the National Science and National Math Teaching Associations.

“To me it’s the fulfillment of our aspirations,” says former student Dr. Rod Lorenz, a Stephen Decatur High School graduate who spent much of his career in a leadership role at the University of Illinois College of Medicine. “Seeing the feedback from teachers regarding their experiences is very satisfying. Our idea was to expand opportunities to grow as professionals, and I think we are accomplishing that.”

Contributions to the tax-deductible fund will support innovative educators determined to make an impact. The first instructional growth experiences were funded during the funded during the 2014-2015 school year. Since the Fund’s inception, friends, relatives and students from Miss Svendsen’s days at Woodrow Wilson and Roosevelt Junior High Schools, Stephen Decatur High School and Lakeland College have contributed to an endowment to support the effort. Their gifts together with investment growth have totaled more than \$35,000. Individuals committed to fostering excellence in education continue to provide donations to recognize Miss Svendsen, as well as other teachers, classmates, and family members who have impacted their educational journeys.



TATE & LYLE



Tate & Lyle has been a long-term supporter of Foundation activities. Each fall, the company sponsors incentive awards for the Top Five schools raising funds and collecting canned goods for the WSOY Community Food Drive. An emphasis on nutrition, wellness and community engagement provides funding for grants aimed at increasing student awareness of positive lifestyle choices.

“It’s a huge priority for us to support activities that encourage healthy, active habits,” says Global Brand Manager Jennifer Walker, who has worked to organize north of \$90,000 in contributions from the company over the last eight years.

For more than two decades, activities have spanned hundreds of students at every grade level. Jennifer and former Foundation Trustee Chris Olsen demonstrate a commitment to District 61 by consistently underwriting creative programming such as the Busy Bee Baking project. This program was initially modest, established to include a dozen or so students for cooking activities incorporating concepts like math and budgeting. This model quickly blossomed into a platform for outdoor grilling, family engagement events and social outreach projects (such as creating waterproof blankets for the homeless, which are woven of discarded plastic grocery bags).

Co-coordinator Sara Kennedy and many community volunteers support Busy Bee activities. Vintage Church has partnered to provide food to South Shores students and families through the SuperStars Serve Student-run Food Bank. Busy Bee mentors have taught weaving and woodworking. Activities provide an opportunity for kids to grow their own food at a shared school garden.

To volunteer or donate, you can follow all of the Busy Bees progress on Facebook at South Shores Busy Bees.

Related Tate & Lyle investments impact varied other activities across all age groups, as evidenced by funding for Operation Calculus high school student travel to Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

A significant gift each autumn is also applied to classroom STEM enrichment and related activities.

“It’s important for us to remain flexible to meet the needs of our partners as they evolve,” Jennifer says. “We want to place support where it provides the greatest benefit to students.”

The company has been especially open to shifting priorities within the context of Covid-19 challenges, pivoting to provide additional dollars in support of weekend backpack nutrition programs for families in need.



In a rapidly-changing world, familiarity with new tools and the ability to adapt are keys to finding success as educators.

Presented with innovative technologies, young and experienced teachers alike can be intimidated by strategies they’re asked to implement in the classroom. To support the adoption of new teaching methods, donors in 2014 contributed more than \$40,000 to create a specially-equipped Technology Education Center within District 61’s Professional Development Institute.

This site has provided a centralized venue for tech coaches, teachers, support staff and visiting workshop providers, as well as a well-wired workspace to host collaborative meetings.

Sessions held in the Center have driven home the importance of ongoing instruction as new technologies emerge. With many instructional coaches transitioning back to the classroom, much of this professional development is now carried out at individual buildings. Covid-19 considerations have created an

even greater need for digital touchpoints and virtual information-sharing. Instruction is delivered differently within the pandemic and will continue to adapt into new paradigms moving forward.

The Tech Center is evolving into a hub for data analysis and shared workspace for interpreting what strategies deliver the most support for students. Staff housed here focus on understanding how technology informs best practices in connecting one instructor’s classroom to others.

BENEFITS PROVIDED BY THE TECH CENTER INCLUDE:

- » “Flipped” professional development – Tutorial workshops and teaching videos produced for distribution to teachers and administrators
- » “Flipped” classrooms – Innovative, cutting-edge instruction provided through video lessons online, so that in-class time is used for student collaboration and projects
- » Program coaching – Every building benefits from an off-campus site for tech support teachers need to offer 21st-Century instruction

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS WHO CONTRIBUTED TO ESTABLISH THE TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION CENTER!

- ADM
Ameren
Architectural Expressions
Erv and Linda Arends
BLDD Architects
Caterpillar
Phil and Carol Hazenfield
The Matt Jacobson Family
Bruce and Kay Nims
Paul and Verlyn Rosenberger
Weck Trust





ALUMNI WALK PROJECTS

Thank you to alumni and supporters who contributed by purchasing paving stones for our high school renovation projects.



These gifts exceeded \$75,000, with 100% of the proceeds supporting DPS Foundation. Bricks remain available for inclusion at both Eisenhower and MacArthur, and may also be ordered for installation near the Civic Center downtown (memorial bricks for old Decatur High and Stephen Decatur High School).

PAVERS ARE AVAILABLE

Pavers are available in three sizes, and you can place your request online through the Alumni Walk tab at our Foundation website:

dps61.org/foundation

Be sure to include the wording for your inscription in the “Notes” section at the bottom of the form!



GOING THE DISTANCE

Retired teacher Joe Caputo has maintained a strong personal investment in athletics at the primary grade levels. In addition to organizational work in basketball and other sports, his Elementary and Middle School Cross-Country Program represents a strategic effort to prepare younger students for the rigors and discipline required by high school sports. Contributors have provided combined gifts of \$21,691 to this designated activities fund to sponsor the annual District-wide meet and associated events leading up to it.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN INNOVATORS

In 2018, students from French STEM Academy collaborated with high school Operation Calculus students to create a Black Innovators exhibit at the African-American Cultural Museum and Genealogical Society.

(Visit virtually at african-americancultural.org)

6th-Grade French Academy teacher **Tami Roberts**, Eisenhower Literacy Specialist and **Megan Glover-Flanigan** organized the project. Megan says experiences like this one are meaningful to students for a number of reasons, especially gaining a better understanding of and empathy for the challenges minorities have faced throughout our nation’s history.

Fostering open dialogue becomes even more critical as students struggle to process heartbreaking events like the deaths of **George Floyd** and **Breonna Taylor**. Facilitating frank discussion is a vital element of supporting young people in our public schools as they attempt to comprehend race relations.

“It is important that our students have the opportunity to collaboratively develop something that will contribute to the greater good of our community,” Megan says. “In this case, the greater good involves helping to ensure that our community develops a stronger understanding of the contributions of African-American innovators.”

The Foundation places special emphasis on projects and programs that underpin the concept of equality. Trustees encourage efforts to engage in a deeper conversation that develops empathy between students of all races.

Eisenhower High School’s Operation Calculus program made a series of Wednesday visits to 6th-grade students at French Academy. Students worked collaboratively with teachers to contribute their ideas regarding the design of the exhibit, which includes information regarding 20 different African-American innovators on individually wrapped canvases; each highlights contributions to our society in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math.

75 students took part in developing ideas for the exhibit, working alongside **Ms. Evelyn Hood** from the African-American Cultural & Genealogical Society Museum, Director of Operation Calculus, **Justin Hampton**, Instructional Specialist **Kamie Meador**, Eisenhower Principal **Dr. Amy Zahm**, and French STEM Principal **Julie Fane**.



JIM MCELROY

*Stephen Decatur High School,
Class of 1969*

Jim McElroy has always felt an affinity for the underdog.

“I don’t know what is about me,” he laughs. “I tend to find myself wrapped up all in these different causes.”

Mac’s backstory provides indications why, along with the picture of a self-made man. Partway through high school he fled a volatile home, finding himself out on his own. “I’ve slept under bridges a few times in my life,” he says. “I stayed frequently with families of friends.”

Mac’s backstory provides indications why, along with the picture of a self-made man. Partway through high school he fled a volatile home, finding himself out on his own. “I’ve slept under bridges a few times in my life,” he says. “I stayed frequently with families of friends.”

A handful of community anchors steadied him through high school (such as the Decatur Lake Patrol guys, a number of whom are here to celebrate this weekend). After collecting a U. of I. undergraduate degree, Mac bolted to claim his independence in Southern California.

Embracing life as a “beach bum, surfer, and lover of rock and roll,” Mac still managed to push himself through the San Diego School of Law and into a blue-collar legal career. From its start in 1977, his professional life has been devoted to protecting those affected by tragedy or inequity. Both his paid and pro bono work focus on social justice issues, with the attendant question of educational opportunity also defining his practice.

Mac has served on California’s Hate Crimes Commission, and worked on separate trials that resulted in: a \$12.5 million settlement against Tom Metzger’s White Aryan Resistance (W.A.R.); a \$6.2 million settlement against the Aryan Nations in Idaho; and combined \$11.5 million judgements against Billy Ray Johnson and the Imperial Klans of America in Kentucky. At home in San Diego he represented African-American Marine Carlos Colbert, stationed at Camp Pendleton, who was crippled in a beating by white supremacists.

His work opposing such charming entities earned him a “race traitor” label and regular death threats. But he persisted. The confirmed bachelor encountered a defining moment while working on a W.A.R. murder case in Portland, Oregon, where this hate group had beaten to death an Ethiopian college student, Mulugeta Seraw. Mac adopted Henock, the victim’s 10-year old son, brought him to the U.S. from Ethiopia, and proudly watched him graduate from the University of California, Santa Barbara. Henock is a pilot, and a feature film about their life together is in development. Henock’s sister Gelila now lives in the States with Mac and is in her second year of college.

Mac’s career has impacted education through his work with Social Advocates for Youth (SAY); his work with The Storefront, a homeless shelter for teens; his leadership of “The Burrito Boyz” homeless outreach project; the Reality Changers college entrance program; the Southern Poverty Law Center; Think Dignity; and service on the board of the non-profit Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana. His pro bono clients include the United Negro College Fund, the Anti-Defamation League, Planned Parenthood and the Color of Change organization. He has been recognized with the San Diego County Bar Association’s Outstanding Attorney of the Year Award; the ACLU Helen Marston Religious Freedom Award; the Planned Parenthood Margaret Sanger Award for Distinguished Service in Protecting Women’s Rights; the American Constitutional Society Roberto Alvarez Award; the Southern Poverty Law Center’s Distinguished Service Award; and the National Civil Rights Achievement Award from the Anti-Defamation League.



BRINGING LESSONS TO LIFE

“You can have them read all the books you want,” says Montessori teacher Jamie Clubbs, “but until a student walks up the ramp into that box car they don’t really understand what it means, or how it must have felt.”



The rail car she refers to is an actual transport used to remove prisoners to World War II concentration camps. Jamie’s students gained a deeper empathy for those who traveled in the dark, suffocating confines on a visit to the Illinois Holocaust Museum in Skokie. This followed a stop at Chicago’s Museum of Science and Industry, where they explored social justice issues related to the Industrial Revolution and the work of Chinese laborers constructing railroads to the west.

To prepare for their visits, students watched two films, read two personal choice novels (one fiction and one non-fiction), wrote an issues paper, and took part in a web simulation hosted by the Holocaust Museum of Washington, D.C. For that simulation, students identified a specific individual who experienced the Holocaust, learned their life story before, during and after the war and presented this information to the class. All of the work ahead informed the feelings they experienced when confronting real-life the rail car.

8th-Grade teacher Sara Nave organized a similar unit and corresponding trip for her class. Students processed what they absorbed on the trip to create a portfolio of original poems written through the ‘eyes’ of those who played a role in the Holocaust, working from various points of view.

“I want them to hear from survivors and read stories of those who died in the camps, or died protecting children just like them,” Sara says. “They need to be pushed creatively AND with topics that are hard to understand. They need an outlet, a shoulder and to know that it is okay to not know what to say.”

These and similar experiences for kids across the District are underwritten courtesy of ADM’s designated Excursion Fund. Provided in 2019, this special gift sponsors off-campus enrichment activities in STEM and social engagement for students at all grade levels.



ARENDS FUND FOR THE ARTS & TRADES

Erv and Linda Arends

With every Foundation project, our ambition is to spark engagement while introducing students to experiences they would not have without us. Having flexible donors with multiple interests is essential when the Foundation identifies emerging opportunities. Erv and Linda Arends fit this bill to the letter, investing heavily in District 61 students across several different focus areas.

“Giving students a chance to try new things and explore new interests is why we support these creative programs,” says Linda, who is also actively involved with the Symphony Orchestra Guild of Decatur and provides significant support to Millikin University. “They deserve all possible opportunities to discover their own talents.”

Linda’s interests largely occupy the Performing Arts. When she and Erv established their designated fund, they expressed a desire to remain open to underwriting a range of projects while also keeping a bead on areas that interest them both. Thus emerged the Arends Fund for the Arts and Trades.

Erv studied Agricultural Engineering at the University of Illinois, with additional Civil Engineering concentrations. His first support for the Foundation came in developing the DPS Technology Education Center, for which he was the first donor. His priority is promoting the importance of technical and building trades as viable career options.

“There are excellent, excellent job opportunities for these kids if they just give them a look,” says Erv. “I think most don’t realize how much a person can make as an electrician.”

The aim is to re-energize the Construction Trades program, encouraging students to consider carpentry, plumbing, electrical licensure, or a specialty in any of the myriad related fields.

Prior to the past decade a healthy percentage of graduates exited high school with a desire to apprentice with a trade union. Lately, however, fewer and fewer qualified applicants pursue this path. Emphasizing college as the surest road to success is dismissive of opportunities presented through the industrial sector.

Encouraging a conversation through material support is an active way to promote this concept, especially for students eager to graduate and move immediately into a career. Students still considering college may grow intrigued by the prospect of architecture and engineering or related majors.

In past years, the Arends Fund paid for formal curriculum with the collective national trade unions. Most recently, it covered the cost for OSHA (Occupational Health & Safety) certification for all students engaged in the Construction Trades curriculum at the high schools.

“This is a big deal, to have them certified while they’re still in high school,” says Ed Walton, who alongside Glenn Shaffer oversees District 61 Industrial Tech activities. “It means we can evaluate kids as they progress and know their aptitudes and identify those likely to go on and find a successful career in these fields. And when they graduate, they’re ready to start right in with one of our trades organizations.”

Retired Industrial Tech instructor Bud Jackson agrees. His contribution to support trades programming has purchased materials for student-led construction projects, such as building a shade pergola at the Living Science Farm, and he anticipates purchasing tools and related item to encourage similar activities.

“If the students can only understand that these careers are out there and pay so well, that will help grow the numbers,” Bud says. “I think a lot of teachers and counselors and parents don’t realize that. So kids are discouraged from thinking about the Trades as career options.”

Erv’s career included tenures with Dennis Roby & Associates, Kelly Construction and the Parks District, and he maintained a longtime role in an active Decatur professional engineers group.

His interests and Linda’s own intersect in productive ways. An example melding the Performing Arts with technical skills led to Millikin University’s first dual-credit collaboration with District 61:

INTRODUCTION TO ARTS TECHNOLOGY I CREDITS: 3

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is an introductory course in the fundamental principles and techniques of lighting technology and design, audio technology and design, and drafting. The emphasis is on learning how lighting, audio, and drafting are incorporated in live entertainment and on developing a common language in regard to these disciplines. Topics covered include basic understanding of tools, equipment, theories, techniques and careers in the field. Hands on participation in supervised light/sound lab will be required.

The Arends Fund covered 100% of the tuition, fees, textbooks and instructional software for seven District students. The initiative is in keeping with our core belief that every young person deserves a chance to explore their fullest potential.

As with Trades programming, the couple’s sponsorship of this project has encouraged DPS students to broaden their minds and entertain new options for the future. Their appetite for embracing a variety of ideas positions Erv and Linda to influence student growth from multiple directions.

STRATEGY & FOCUS

South Shores Chess Stars

Social Worker Joshua Fazekas always had a hard time fitting in at school. Though clearly bright and capable, he was steered into special education classes after finding difficulty learning in a traditional context. He fit in nowhere, and his frustration showed.

His ability to focus and communicate – as well as his self-confidence in social situations – all improved dramatically when he discovered chess.

“The game was so important to me, developmentally,” says Joshua. “It was a really meaningful event in my life, and I wanted to share it with other kids going through the same difficulties.”

Along with personal growth, chess helped him to process information in a more logical-sequential manner. Multiple scientific studies have demonstrated, emphatically, the benefits of participation for brain development and higher-order thinking.

All this in mind, Joshua felt compelled to share his love of the game with students he works with in his current position. His inspiration led to the South Shores Chess Stars.

“I am excited to dedicate my time and efforts to give these kids something to believe in,” Joshua continues. “I want them to take pride in how they carry themselves after a win or after a loss. I want them to start playing tournament chess and build healthy relationships with their opponents. Chess will bring much more to their lives than they can imagine. I am proud of this chess club, but most importantly, I am proud of each one individually.”

Students in the program often bring the same issues he had. Academically, behaviorally and socially, kids who act out frequently do so due to frustration, or to trauma in some aspect of their lives. Some don’t feel good about sports or music or other special activities. For these, the chess program offers an unconditional welcome. Students at all achievement levels find a place here.

Community member Doug Warren has volunteered to coach and fundraise in support of Joshua’s efforts. “The kids can learn a great deal from the game beyond learning how to move a chess piece,” he says. “They learn about themselves individually, and how to concentrate. But more than that it builds self-confidence that they can achieve personal goals.

For some students this means simply learning the rules. For kids with a particular aptitude and curiosity, this has meant serious competition.

South Shores students have participated in multiple state tournaments as well as several national events. Very quickly, students with no experience at the game progressed to competing at an advanced level.

OUR PLAYERS PLAY IN UNITED STATES CHESS FEDERATION RATED TOURNAMENTS.

LAST YEAR’S RESULTS:

- » **Illinois’ Downstate Chess Coach of the Year**
Joshua Fazekas
- » **St. Mary’s Winter Chess Classic - Peoria**
1st Place (Cayden Peters)
stmaryschess.com/STMregistration
- » **Greater Chicago K-12 Chess Championship U300**
Team 4rd out of 23 Schools
- » **Greater Chicago K-12 Chess Championship U300**
1st out of 158 Players (Christian Morrison)
- » **Champaign Chess Challenge U1200** 2nd (JD Groves)
- » **IESA Chess State Championship**
Team placed 12th of 53 Schools
- » **Bronze Medalist and 2nd runner-up medalist**
(JD Groves and Dunlyn Wilson)
- » **2019 K-12 National High School Chess Championship U800**
Team 23rd out of 63 Schools
(a remarkable achievement for elementary students competing against older players)
- » **2019 K-6 National Elementary Chess Championship U900**
Team 16th out of 58 Schools
- » **JD Groves placed 33rd out of 358 Players**
- » **JD Groves 1st place in the U899-800 Blitz National Championship**



Chess homework assignments, hours logged on to Chess.com – which permits administrators to track the number of hours that students spent online solving puzzles, studying strategy, or playing virtual games with others – internal and external school competitions, tournaments and the corresponding preparation hours all help students as they grow and must respond to pressure situations in life appropriately, calmly, and strategically.

Players from Garfield Montessori and Johns Hill Magnet School also now participate, with students traveling to tournaments alongside the South Shores team.

After the Foundation provided seed funding, Doug and other private donors have contributed a combined \$15,819 to a fund designated for support of the chess program. Expanding opportunities for students in additional buildings will represent the next phase of development.

Team coordinators hope to identify a master-level coach to assist in developing students beyond where they have with the school and community volunteers.



THOSE INTERESTED IN SUPPORTING OUR CHESS PROGRAM CAN REACH

MR. FAZEKAS
JPFZEKAS@DPS61.ORG

2012-2020
CLASSROOM
GRANT
ACTIVITIES
SUMMARY

Over the last eight years partners of the Decatur Public Schools Foundation have funded nearly 900 individual enrichment grants, special projects and classroom awards.

These range from a \$25 fee to access online case studies to whole-school and multi-building initiatives north of \$16,000. Teachers successfully applying for funds bring forward a variety of ideas to engage students in creative ways. Likewise, donors supporting specific designated programming work with the Foundation to align their gifts with areas of personal interest. Many contributors add to existing funds, while others create new categories for giving.

CLASSROOM PROJECT TITLE

1st MidAmerica Classroom Grants
2015 Abraham Lincoln Literature Nominees
2018 National Elementary Chess Championship
2nd-Grade Art Experience
3D Printing for Science and Engineering
3rd Graders Making a Splash
4-H Electronics Investigation
4-H Engineering Design Program
4-H Science at Stevenson
6th Grade Team Challenge Course
A Graphic Adaptation of History
A Light Into STEM for Our Community
A to Z Apples to Zebras
Active Music Making
Adapted Literacy for Essential Skills
ADM Food Science Challenge
Adventures With Animals
Aeronautics Makerspace Unit
African American STEM Innovators
African Clay Boxes
After School Gaming
Aikman Wildlife Community Outing
Allerton Park Rock Climbing
Altered Consciousness Goggles
Alternative Science Curriculum
Amazing Dudley/Red Ribbon Week
Ancient Egypt
Animals Two by Two
Apiary Project-Based Learning
Apple Orchard Field Trip
Apples to Zebras
Applied Industrial Technology
Art for Our Habitat House

SCHOOLS

All Elementaries - 15 total grants to date
MacArthur High School
South Shores Elementary
2nd Grade Classrooms
Dennis Lab School
French Academy
Steven Decatur Middle School
Durfee Magnet School
Stevenson Elementary
French STEM Academy
Steven Decatur Middle School
French STEM Academy
Dennis Lab School
Harris Elementary
Harris Elementary
Eisenhower and MacArthur
Harris Elementary
South Shores Elementary
Eisenhower High School/French STEM Academy
Eisenhower High School
Stephen Decatur Middle School
Parsons Elementary
Stephen Decatur Middle School
MacArthur High School
Stephen Decatur Middle School
Stevenson Elementary
Johns Hill Magnet School
Dennis Lab School
Johns Hill Magnet School
Dennis Lab School
Eisenhower High School
Dennis Lab School

AMOUNT

\$3,750
\$382
\$630
\$1,548
\$2,874
\$475
\$2,500
\$6,549
\$7,854
\$1,180
\$2,013
\$1,000
\$250
\$1,642
\$499
\$7,861
\$200
\$1,224
\$1,501
\$496
\$289
\$472
\$300
\$421
\$427
\$200
\$403
\$582
\$1,824
\$369
\$250
\$786
\$1,715

CLASSROOM PROJECTS

CLASSROOM PROJECT TITLE

Arts Exposure Enrichment
Arts Integration - Phase I
Arts Integration - Phase II
Aspiration Day at Garfield
Baggo Project-Based Learning
Bat Project-Based Learning
Bat Unit
Baum Junior Lego League
Baum School STEM Maker Space
Bean Bag Lap Pads
Bearded Dragon Diet
Beautiful Inside and Out
Beautifying Green Space
Beautifying Our Environment with Plants
Behavior Program Reinforcement
Big World for Little Explorer
Binge's Bountiful Book Bunch
Black History Storyteller
Blasting Off in 4th Grade
Brent Gault Arts Workshop
Bucket Brigade
Building Mind & Body
Building Time Engineering
Busy Bee Bakers
Butterfly Garden 2016
Calculators Across the Classroom
Can Something I Make Impact My World?
Cans to Water our World
Career and College Fair
Career Exploration Literacy
Career Path Coding and IT Development
Case Study Fees
Challenger Space Center /Rendezvous With a Comet
Challenger Space Exploration
Chamber Theater Field Trip
Children's Discovery Museum
Children's Museum Partnership
Civil War Lincoln Library
Classroom Enrichment Materials
Clay Pockets
Cleaning Without Chemicals
Close Up Washington
Cobblestone Magazine
Coding and Robotics
Coding With Dash Robots
Common Core Math Stations
Common Core Workshop - Regional Office of Education
Communicating in the Community
Community Garden at French Academy
Community Impact Project
Community Outings for Life Skills
Compost and Butterflies
Connected Science Systems in AP (Mohan Grant)
Creative Casting
Cultivating Mindfulness

SCHOOLS

Durfee Magnet School
Johns Hill Magnet School
Johns Hill Magnet School
Garfield Montessori
Dennis Lab School
Dennis Lab School
Muffley Elementary
Baum Elementary
Baum Elementary
Garfield Montessori
French STEM Academy
French STEM Academy
Stephen Decatur Middle School
Hope Academy
Harris Elementary
Dennis Lab School
South Shores Elementary
Stevenson Elementary
South Shores Elementary
Johns Hill Magnet School
French Academy
SEAP (Special Education Alternative Program)
Baum Elementary
South Shores Elementary
Oak Grove Elementary
Baum Elementary
Camp Connections
Stevenson Elementary
Hope Academy
Garfield Montessori
Eisenhower and MacArthur
Eisenhower High School
Dennis Lab School
Hope Academy
Johns Hill Magnet School
Harris Elementary
Muffley Elementary
Garfield Montessori
Hope Academy
Stephen Decatur/Thomas Jefferson Middle School
Parsons Elementary Life Skills
Eisenhower High School
Stephen Decatur Middle School
Baum Elementary
Stevenson Elementary
Baum Elementary
MacArthur High School
Enterprise Montessori/Harris Elementary
French Academy
Harris Elementary
Harris Elementary
Harris Elementary
MacArthur High School
Stephen Decatur Middle School
Durfee Magnet School

AMOUNT

\$1,789
\$2,500
\$1,500
\$83
\$495
\$550
\$459
\$1,469
\$5,799
\$208
\$400
\$125
\$250
\$250
\$500
\$2,218
\$369
\$200
\$476
\$1,500
\$465
\$1,500
\$443
\$2,500
\$500
\$410
\$2,299
\$86
\$248
\$187
\$9,911
\$25
\$978
\$900
\$3,400
\$500
\$500
\$480
\$2,180
\$500
\$250
\$3,000
\$2,005
\$1,895
\$2,797
\$2,312
\$800
\$785
\$199
\$300
\$440
\$247
\$5,268
\$498
\$250

CLASSROOM PROJECT TITLE	SCHOOLS	AMOUNT
Garden Planters and Beautification	Harris Elementary	\$225
Garden Renovation/Rain Garden	Garfield Montessori	\$2,500
Garden to Gut	Dennis Lab School	\$764
General Painting Units	Durfee Magnet School	\$306
Generals INN	MacArthur High School	\$500
Generation 1 iPad Covers	Hope Academy	\$225
George Washington's Socks	Thomas Jefferson Middle School	\$164
Girls on the Run	Hope Academy	\$2,322
Girls Who Code - Exploring The Field	South Shores Elementary	\$459
Going Green!	Camp Connections	\$2,312
Gone With the Wind	Dennis Lab School	\$395
Graphic Novels at Steven Decatur	Stephen Decatur Middle School	\$1,185
Great Pumpkin Patch	Muffley Elementary	\$500
Green Cleanin' at Home	Parsons Elementary	\$250
Greening Our Garden	Harris Elementary	\$161
Ground to Gourmet	Webster Cantrell Hall - special collaboration	\$206
Growing Healthy Minds	Garfield Montessori	\$250
Happy Homes for the Neighborhood	Dennis Lab School	\$480
Harris Garden Club	Harris Elementary	\$250
Hattie Mae's Halloween	Parsons Elementary	\$864
Healthy Classroom Cleaning	Parsons Elementary	\$473
Henry & Mudge PASS Performance	Parsons Elementary	\$90
Hey Good Lookin', Whatcha Got Cookin'	Dennis Lab School	\$350
Hispanic Flamenco Ball	Johns Hill Magnet School	\$500
Historical Fiction in Social Studies	Stephen Decatur Middle School	\$500
Historical Treasure Seeking	Stephen Decatur Middle School	\$1,225
HOBY Leadership Seminar	MacArthur High School	\$585
Holocaust Field Trip	Garfield Montessori	\$2,754
Hope Academy Black History Bowl	Hope Academy	\$35
Hope Academy Coffee Shop	Hope Academy	\$2,347
Spy a Bird	Muffley Elementary	\$250
Illini Fighting Hunger Food Packaging	Camp Connections	\$500
Illinois All Schools-State Band	Eisenhower High School	\$175
Illinois State Theatre Festival	Eisenhower High School	\$792
Illinois Symphony	Garfield Montessori	\$174
Industrial Science and Social Justice	Garfield Montessori	\$2,400
Innovation with SPARKS	Hope Academy	\$495
Integrating Social Studies with Literacy	Baum Elementary	\$471
Intro to Animals and the Environment	Pershing Early Learning Center	\$300
Introducing STEM-sational Learning for Pre-K	Pershing Early Learning Center	\$2,346
Iqbal Literature Unit	Thomas Jefferson Middle School	\$500
It's a BIG World Out There!	MacArthur High School	\$500
It's Showtime	Eisenhower and MacArthur	\$1,000
Johns Hill Leadership	Johns Hill Magnet School	\$4,500
Junior Scholastic Magazines	Thomas Jefferson Middle School	\$228
Just Stack It Jaguar Style	Franklin Elementary	\$398
Kindergarten Garden	South Shores Elementary	\$180
Knowledge Beyond the Stars	Dennis Lab School	\$47
Lakeshore Learning Centers	Enterprise Montessori	\$484
Language Arts Library Trips	Dennis Lab School	\$2,500
Latin Jazz Project	Johns Hill Magnet School	\$750
Launching a Brand	Eisenhower High School	\$4,713
Lavender Wellness/Green Cleaning	Parsons Elementary	\$224
Lazan Holocaust Presentation	Multiple buildings	\$2,380
Learning About Mother Earth	Stevenson Elementary	\$500

CLASSROOM PROJECT TITLE	SCHOOLS	AMOUNT	CLASSROOM PROJECT TITLE	SCHOOLS	AMOUNT
Learning About Plants	Parsons Elementary	\$52	Osmo Work Stations	Baum Elementary	\$500
Learning Commons Renovation	Harris Elementary	\$4,607	Out of Our Shells	Durfee Magnet School	\$195
Learning Lab Technology and Workspace	Dennis Lab School	\$16,825	Outdoor STEM Education - Camp Ondessonk	Montessori Academy for Peace	\$14,794
Lego League, Jr	Muffley Elementary	\$369	Panther eSports Program	Eisenhower High School	\$5,000
Lego Story Starter	Durfee Magnet School	\$729	PBIS Duct Tape Bag and Picture Framing	Stephen Decatur Middle School	\$162
Let's Build	Pershing Early Learning Center	\$169	PE Dress Supply	MacArthur High School	\$500
Let's Learn About Illinois	Franklin Elementary	\$120	Peer Mediation Program	Eisenhower High School	\$3,240
Life at the Pond	Dennis Lab School	\$1,106	Peer Mediation Program - Phase II	Eisenhower High School	\$3,100
Life Skills Community Outings	Oak Grove Elementary/Harris Elementary	\$1,894	Pennies for P.E.	Dennis Lab School	\$179
Lincoln Museum	Dennis Lab School	\$493	People, Plants, Pollinators, and Produce	Stevenson Elementary	\$574
Line and Design	Eisenhower High School	\$486	Phoenix Physical Activity	Phoenix Academy	\$400
Literacy Engagement	Dennis Lab School	\$5,000	Photography & Digital Media Art	Stephen Decatur Middle School	\$496
Literacy Improvement Initiative	French STEM Academy	\$919	Photos on Fabric	Stephen Decatur Middle School	\$138
Little Bits Go a Long Way	Stevenson Elementary	\$3,063	Pirates of the 4th of July Bench	Dennis Lab School	\$229
Little Engineers	Pershing Early Learning Center	\$874	Pizza Box Solar Ovens	Stevenson Elementary	\$185
Logitech Crayon Stylus for Digital Arts	Stephen Decatur Middle School	\$1,499	Pizza Garden	Dennis Lab School	\$329
MakeMusic Finale Composition	Eisenhower High School	\$1,550	Plant and Gardens Unit	Oak Grove Elementary	\$250
Making the Earth Better By Gardening	Dennis Lab School	\$248	Planting Oak Grove	Oak Grove Elementary	\$250
Maria Montessori Musical	Garfield Montessori	\$500	Pollinators: Bees and Butterfiles	Dennis Lab School	\$288
Marine Life Education	Baum Elementary	\$1,000	Powering Up Students w/Knowledge	South Shores Elementary	\$590
Math Learning Centers	Oak Grove Elementary	\$500	Printmaking at Stephen Decatur	Stephen Decatur Middle School	\$485
Memory Boxes - 8th Grade	Thomas Jefferson Middle School	\$500	Project Focus	Garfield Montessori	\$194
Mental Health and Essential Oils	Parsons Elementary	\$243	Project Makerspace	South Shores Elementary/Parsons Elementary	\$5,015
MHS Canadian Music Festival	MacArthur High School	\$550	Project Social Emotional Learning	Franklin Elementary	\$1,489
MHS Volleyball Uniforms	MacArthur High School	\$2,819	Promethean ActivPanel for Speech	Pershing Early Learning Center	\$2,504
Micronauts Space and Science Adventure	Hope Academy	\$300	Protected and Endangered Animals	Dennis Lab School	\$403
Middle School Drama Class	Johns Hill Magnet School	\$1,045	Pumpkin Palooza	Muffley Elementary	\$620
Middle School Jazz Trip to Elmhurst	Garfield Montessori	\$500	Puppy Puzzler	Dennis Lab School	\$1,500
Middle School on the Move	7th and 8th Grade Gifted Programs	\$2,100	Rappin' With Raptors	South Shores Elementary	\$1,290
Middle School on the Move Conference	7th and 8th Grade Gifted Programs	\$1,740	Reading Buddies Explore Apples and Bees	Muffley Elementary	\$420
Middle School STEM Engagement	Professional Development Institute	\$11,200	Reading Learning Centers	Muffley Elementary	\$243
Middle-School Food Innovation Challenge	Middle Schools	\$2,000	Reading Learning Centers	Oak Grove Elementary	\$500
Millikin Homestead Visit	3rd Grade Classes	\$1,476	Real Life Math	Franklin Elementary	\$489
Mistletoe Merchants	Dennis Lab School	\$740	Recycled Art and Engineers - Phase I	Durfee Magnet School	\$250
Muffley Media Center	Muffley Elementary	\$2,500	Recycled Art and Engineers - Phase II	Durfee Magnet School	\$750
Mulch Mania	Harris Elementary	\$249	Recycled Green House	Dennis Lab School	\$250
Music in the Classroom	French STEM Academy	\$1,216	Recycling Projects on Earth Day	Durfee Magnet School	\$250
Music, Movement, and Literacy	Baum Elementary	\$440	Reduce, Re-Use, Recycle	Dennis Lab School	\$169
My Earth Day Scent Box	Parsons Elementary	\$250	Rendezvous With a Comet - Mission II	Dennis Lab School	\$3,216
National Novel Writing Month	Garfield Montessori	\$750	Renewable Organic Compost	Garfield Montessori	\$250
National Weather Service	Muffley Elementary	\$250	Reuse and Recycle - Creating Conscientious Consumers	Harris Elementary	\$240
Nature Exploration	Dennis Lab School	\$189	Richland Nutcracker Set	Parsons Elementary/Harris Elementary	\$950
Nature Sensory Area	Pershing Early Learning Center	\$250	RISE-ing in the Community	Harris Elementary	\$500
Nearpod #1	Eisenhower High School	\$240	Rock Springs Excursion	Dennis Lab School	\$141
Newspapers in Education	All Schools / Herald & Review	\$7,500	Rock Springs on Earth Day	Dennis Lab School	\$250
Next Generation Learners	Parsons Elementary	\$4,000	Salsa and Tomato Sauce Garden	Harris Elementary	\$215
Oak Grove Assembly with Eisenhower High School	Oak Grove Elementary	\$200	Save a Tree, Use a Dry Erase Board	French STEM Academy	\$272
Omnikin Ball for P.E.	Dennis Lab School	\$269	Saving Pollinators in Peril	Johns Hill Magnet School	\$250
Omnikin Unit	Hope Academy	\$450	Scholastic Bowl: Slammer System	Stephen Decatur Middle School	\$2,375
One Book One School	Thomas Jefferson	\$4,373	Scholastic News	Baum Elementary	\$344
Open Space Seating	Dennis Lab School	\$3,888	School Beautification	Oak Grove Elementary	\$250
Operation ZEN	Durfee Magnet School	\$334	School Nature Trail Stations	Enterprise Montessori	\$250
Orchard at Enterprise	Enterprise Elementary	\$250	Science in the Classroom	Stephen Decatur Middle School	\$365
OSMO in K-2 Centers	French Academy	\$500	Science Stage Show	Muffley Elementary	\$355
Osmo Learning - Special Education	Harris Elementary	\$480	Scooter Hockey for P.E.	Dennis Lab School	\$1,399

CLASSROOM PROJECT TITLE	SCHOOLS	AMOUNT	CLASSROOM PROJECT TITLE	SCHOOLS	AMOUNT
Scratch Grant Coding	South Shores Elementary	\$500	Sustainable Self	Stephen Decatur Middle School	\$250
Second Step Curriculum	Garfield Montessori	\$1,650	SYAC Presentation	Eisenhower and MacArthur	\$500
Seeing History Come Alive	Stephen Decatur Middle School	\$682	Take a Walk on the Wild Side	French STEM Academy	\$500
Sensory Garden Project	Harris Elementary	\$500	Talking About Touching Safety Program	Garfield Montessori	\$398
Set Construction – The Drowsy Chaperone	Eisenhower High School	\$1,010	Teacher Exchange with China	Dennis Lab School	\$2,000
Sewing Skills for Consumer Ed	MacArthur High School	\$2,421	Teaching Gardens	Enterprise Montessori/Garfield Montessori	\$500
Shared Identity	Phoenix Academy	\$1,355	Team Quest Challenge	All Middle Schools	\$7,864
Simulations Throughout U.S. History	Stephen Decatur Middle School	\$1,749	Tell Me a Story	South Shores Elementary	\$500
Smoky Mountain Music Festival	MacArthur High School	\$1,500	Tempting Tuesday	Pershing Early Learning Center	\$500
So, You Think You Want to Be an Author?	Parsons Elementary	\$561	Thanksgiving Book Project	Parsons Elementary	\$499
Soccer Fun for Everyone!	Pershing Early Learning Center	\$1,148	The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers	Eisenhower High School	\$644
Social Emotional Literacy	Garfield Montessori	\$144	The Sun, the Soil, the Tomato	Stevenson Elementary	\$500
Social Emotional Support Earth Day Activities	Garfield Montessori	\$247	Thomas Jefferson Life Skills Coffee Shop	Thomas Jefferson Middle School	\$500
Social Work Basketball	Garfield Montessori	\$547	Tinker Crates	Durfee Magnet School	\$2,790
Solar Oven Pizza	South Shores Elementary	\$55	To Infinity and Beyond	Elementary and Middle Grades	\$1,546
Solar Panels for Sierra Leone	Hope Academy	\$500	To Infinity and Beyond - Cold War Space	Stephen Decatur Middle School	\$1,688
Someone’s in the Kitchen w/Dennis	Dennis Lab School	\$284	Toad-ally Awesome Habitats	Dennis Lab School	\$381
Soul Food Project	Dennis Lab School	\$2,400	Toying Around	Dennis Lab School	\$82
South Shores Chess Club - Startup Grant	South Shores Elementary	\$538	Tracking Academic Engagement	Harris Elementary	\$368
South Shores Music	South Shores Elementary	\$10,000	Treasure’s Garden of Hope	Hope Academy	\$750
South Shores Seed Project	South Shores Elementary	\$241	Tree Time	Harris Elementary	\$215
Space Grant	Dennis Lab School	\$1,216	Truancy Prevention I and II	Harris Elementary/French STEM Academy	\$560
Speak Softly and Listen Loudly	Thomas Jefferson Middle School	\$528	Try It Tuesday and Healthy Snacks	Dennis Lab School	\$7,925
Special Education Basketball Program	Durfee Magnet School	\$1,895	Ukulele at Parsons	Parsons Elementary	\$1,518
Special Needs Name Stamps	Harris Elementary	\$482	Using Literacy to Enhance Social/Emotion.	Garfield Montessori	\$488
Speech Team Event Supplies	Garfield Montessori	\$500	Using Math Stations	Baum Elementary	\$979
Springfield Rock the Vote	Dennis Lab School	\$1,373	Vegetable Gardening	Thomas Jefferson Middle School	\$250
St. Louis Science Center and Planetarium	Parsons Elementary/Baum Elementary	\$2,623	Vernier Probes and Ipads	Thomas Jefferson Middle School	\$506
St. Louis Symphony Concert	Garfield Montessori	\$1,329	Versatile Magic	Franklin Elementary	\$1,715
Stamping With Reflections	MacArthur High School	\$95	Video Production	Garfield Montessori	\$7,190
Standing Desks for ADD	Durfee Magnet School	\$500	Virtual World for Peace & Hope	Hope Academy	\$2,500
Star Lab	Dennis Lab School	\$125	Visual Literacy	Stephen Decatur Middle School	\$465
State Capital Visit	Franklin Elementary	\$250	Viva el Espanol	Hope Academy	\$498
STEM Friday Fun	Stevenson Elementary	\$500	Wanted: New Herp	Muffley Elementary	\$500
STEM in the Classroom	Harris Elementary	\$1,619	Warrior Project Printmaking	Eisenhower High School	\$500
STEM Light Programming	French STEM Academy	\$400	Watch it Grow!	Thomas Jefferson Middle School	\$120
STEM Little Library	French STEM Academy	\$500	Water Exploration for Outdoor Learning	Pershing Early Learning Center	\$250
STEM Playhouse	French STEM Academy	\$1,314	We Rise!	Phoenix Academy	\$1,500
STEM School Certification	French STEM Academy	\$2,500	Weather Balloon Launch Project - Mohan Fund	MacArthur High School	\$3,200
Step it Up (Fitness)	Dennis Lab School	\$1,553	Weather Station	Harris Elementary	\$250
Stephen Decatur Board Gamers Club	Stephen Decatur Middle School	\$263	Webster Cantrell Assembly	Webster Cantrell Hall - special collaboration	\$200
Stephen Decatur Courtyard Renovation	Stephen Decatur Middle School	\$250	Welcome to Math Land	French STEM Academy	\$439
Stephen Decatur Martial Arts	Stephen Decatur Middle School	\$5,671	West Suburban Chicago Sports complex	Durfee Magnet School	\$1,259
Stephen Decatur Martial Arts - Bigger and Better	Stephen Decatur Middle School	\$3,853	What’s All the Buzz in the K-1 Hive?	French STEM Academy	\$3,400
Stephen Decatur Newspaper	Stephen Decatur Middle School	\$300	Woodcraft Enrichment Unit	MacArthur High School	\$2,280
Stephen Decatur STEM Resource Program	Stephen Decatur Middle School	\$1,571	Worth the “Weight”	Harris Elementary	\$548
Stevenson Cedar Lake Assembly	Stevenson Elementary	\$160	Year-Round Garden	Harris Elementary	\$250
Stevenson Makerspace	Stevenson Elementary	\$2,600	Yoga Ball Seating	Brush College Elementary	\$403
Stories, Songs, and Words to Apply	South Shores Elementary	\$1,800	You Rock	Dennis Lab School	\$1,213
Student Council Community Engagement	Stephen Decatur Middle School	\$250			
Student Council to Turkey Run	Stephen Decatur Middle School	\$400			
Student Networking Group	Eisenhower and MacArthur	\$1,320			
Study of Ancient Egypt - FIELD MUSEUM	Johns Hill Magnet School	\$1,067			
Summer Reading Sustainable Bags	Oak Grove Elementary	\$249			
Super Stars See Starlab	South Shores Elementary	\$175			

2012-2020
TOTAL CLASSROOM PROJECTS

\$518,184

SPECIAL PROGRAM	SCHOOLS	AMOUNT	SPECIAL PROGRAM	SCHOOLS	AMOUNT
2017 Farm Progress Show	All District 6th Graders	\$21,357	Leading the Way Fund	Eisenhower and MacArthur	\$9,529
American Dreamers STEM Lab	American Dreamers STEM Academy	\$5,000	MacArthur High School Volleyball	MacArthur High School	\$2,819
Arends Fund for the Arts & Trades	Multiple Schools	\$26,239	MacArthur Victory Fund Activities	MacArthur High School	\$43,555
Big Blue Backpacks	Dennis Lab School	\$23,287	Mandarin Language Lessons	Dennis Lab School	\$7,250
Bob Jones Music Fund Activities	All Grade Levels	\$77,232	Michael Beschloss Presidential Historian	Eisenhower and MacArthur	\$5,000
Brintlinger Awards	Eisenhower and MacArthur	\$2,400	Miglio Fund - Library Enhancement	Various	\$4,500
Chess Activities Fund	South Shores Elementary	\$15,819	Montessori Facilities and Enrichment	Montessori Academy for Peace	\$326,903
Chicago Mercantile Exchange Pre-K Math	Pre-Kindergarten sites	\$690,000	Muffley Buddy Bench Project	Muffley Elementary	\$1,120
Close Up Washington	Eisenhower High School	\$6,000	Music Enrichment at South Shores	South Shores Elementary	\$30,000
Construction Trades Program	Eisenhower and MacArthur	\$6,738	National Youth Leadership Forum	Eisenhower and MacArthur	\$2,500
CSl: Creative Science Investigations (2012 - 2015)	All elementaries	\$413,261	Newspapers in Education	All	\$2,500
Decatur Club Internship Luncheon	Eisenhower and MacArthur	\$500	Operation Calculus	EHS/MHS/Hope/SDMS	\$492,872
Dennis Learning Lab Renovation	Dennis Lab School	\$105,370	Outstanding Educator Awards - 1st MidAmerica	All Buildings	\$7,000
Doug Hagen Memorial Award (established 2020)	MacArthur High School	\$8,709	Parent Leadership Training Initiative	All grades	\$14,000
DPS Film Festival / Land of Lincoln Credit Union	All grades	\$5,000	Parsons Outdoor Facilities Fund	Parsons Elementary	\$35,732
DPS Technology Education Center	Professional Development Institute	\$40,600	Pershing Pre-Kindergarten Enrichment	Pershing	\$13,200
Durfee Playground Renovation	Durfee Magnet	\$64,150	Pre-Kindergarten Classroom Development	Dennis Lab School	\$15,000
Dwayne O. Andreas Ag Academy	Eisenhower and MacArthur	\$1,658,728	Project-Based Learning	Dennis Lab School	\$76,869
Eisenhower Instrument Library Expansion	Eisenhower High School	\$10,000	Ray Rients Memorial Award (established 2018)	MacArthur High School	\$10,000
Eisenhower Weight Room Expansion	Eisenhower High School	\$4,528	Richland Dual Credit	EHS/MHS	\$30,720
Elementary and Middle School Athletics	1st to 8th grade	\$21,422	School Physical Sponsorships	All	\$3,080
Eline Svendsen Fund	Middle and High Schools	\$41,532	Sherrod’s Independent Mentoring Program	Eisenhower and MacArthur	\$15,000
Exceptional Senior Awards	Eisenhower and MacArthur	\$4,000	South Shores Music	South Shores Elementary	\$10,000
FarmBot STEM Enrichment	Stephen Decatur Middle School Ag	\$5,000	South Shores STEM Learning Centers - Mohan Fund	Kindergarten - 6th	\$17,000
First-Year Teacher Orientation Luncheons	All buildings	\$2,750	Spycher Teacher's Fund Awards	225 Awards	\$28,125
First-Year Teacher Welcome Awards	All buildings	\$6,400	STEM Professional Development	Phoenix Academy	\$4,091
Formal Choral Apparel	Eisenhower and MacArthur	\$10,000	Stephen Decatur Library Expansion	Stephen Decatur Middle School	\$1,591
Future Medical Leaders Conference - Washington, D.C.	Eisenhower High School	\$2,083	Stephen Decatur M.S. Student Council	Stephen Decatur Middle School	\$1,072
Game Plan Music Curriculum	All Kindergarten through 5th Grade	\$10,950	Stevenson Teachers Classroom Grants	Stevenson Elementary	\$6,300
Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls	All grades	\$2,128	Tate & Lyle Braggin’ Rights Game	Eisenhower and MacArthur	\$15,000
Harris Alternative 7 Mindsets	Harris Alternative	\$11,800	Tate & Lyle Food Drive Incentives	All schools	\$17,500
Harris Thanksgiving Lunch	Harris and Hope	\$78,480	Tate & Lyle Food Drive Incentives	All grades	\$22,500
Hickory Point Bank Financial Literacy	Eisenhower and MacArthur	\$1,245	Teacher Certification Registrations	All grades	\$2,000
High School Cross Country	MHS	\$250	Technology Lab Resources	Dennis Lab School	\$10,000
Instructional Furnishings Grant	Dennis Lab School	\$23,353	Turkey Tournament	Statewide high schools	\$55,000
Instrument Library	All buildings	\$38,825			
Internship Luncheon/Decatur Club	Eisenhower and MacArthur	\$1,000			
Jerry J. Dawson Civic Leadership Institute	Eisenhower and MacArthur	\$2,478,311			
Johns Hill Arts and Leadership	Johns Hill	\$41,566			
Junior Welfare Association Awards	Eisenhower and MacArthur	\$2,000			
JWA Scholarship	Eisenhower and MacArthur	\$4,500			
Kids + Books = Success	Pre-K to 12th	\$207,900			
Kistler-Scott Performing Arts Fund	Eisenhower High School	\$9,173			
Lab School 4-H	Dennis Lab School	\$39,064			

2012-2020
TOTAL SPECIAL PROGRAMS

\$7,567,977



“I know that many innovative ideas won’t ever be implemented unless alternative sources of funding are made available.”

“As a former teacher,”

Sue says, “I know that many innovative ideas won’t ever be implemented unless alternative sources of funding are made available. The DPS Foundation is one wonderful source.”

Like many Foundation donors, Sue is personally involved with a number of meaningful local causes. A past board member for the Oglesby Mansion in Decatur, she cooked and served meals at the mansion and guided tours of the historic site. She has also done volunteer work for the DOVE Domestic Violence Program, Webster-Cantrell Hall, the Decatur women’s prison and Dennis Lab School. She has served on the Millikin University Alumni Board and on the Millikin Board of Trustees. She is a sponsor for the Bud and Lauri Pilling Scholarship, which is given with preference for an international student. Pilling Chapel on campus exists thanks to a family gift to the university.

Sue is acting Treasurer of the Pilling Family Foundation and has served as a Decatur Public Schools Foundation Trustee since 2015. Our vision fits her experience as an educator and her understanding of the impact great teaching can create.

“I support the Foundation because it is the best way I know to serve our children and strengthen our community,” she says. “Supporting the Foundation is an investment in our city’s long-term future.”



SUE PILLING WALKER

Sue Pilling Walker attended the Decatur Public Schools from Kindergarten through 12th grade, beginning at Southeast Grade School, then Johns Hill Junior High and graduation from Eisenhower High School. After graduating in 1974 with an elementary education degree from Millikin University, she earned a master’s degree in education from the University of Illinois in Champaign.

Sue taught in District 61 for 25 years, concluding with 7th grade math at Thomas Jefferson Middle School just prior to retirement. She helped establish the first DPS computer lab at Centennial Magnet School and continued to teach computer skills at Johns Hill when the magnet school moved to its new location. She worked with a wide range of ages, teaching 3rd through 6th grade at Durfee, Brush College and Muffley Elementary Schools, retiring in May 2012. Sue’s two adult children also attended Decatur Public Schools, both earning their diplomas from MacArthur.





“I am passionate about the work we do at the Foundation. We get a great chance to provide students with unique enrichment opportunities, and to share resources with teachers who dare to do things differently.”

- Mike Allen



One unique facet of the Foundation’s structure is that Trustees invite year-round grant applications for review. Many peer organizations require teachers to write proposals over the summer and submit them in the fall for a one-time review in a huge pool of applicants. Our perspective is different.

“A teacher or a group of students can have a great idea in April just as often as September,” points out Trustee Sue Pilling Walker. “It also puts less pressure on teachers to come up with an idea right at the beginning of the year.”

This differentiation is an aspect of Foundation operations that puts the needs of teachers at the forefront of what we do. Providing educators with consistent support means making it efficient for them to apply, coaching them through the process, and alerting to them of their grant’s approval within a few weeks’ time, rather than waiting for a chance one time per year. It creates additional work for the

Grant Committee, but affords the surest opportunity to impact more classrooms.

Teachers and building principals or support staff are invited to “pre-pitch” ideas to the Foundation prior to submitting. In this way, there’s an opportunity to guide the application process and land on a proposal with a great chance for success.

“Our goal is to work with teachers to screen proposals IN rather than out,” says Kathy Thompson, Foundation Secretary and member of the Grant Review Committee. “When a person submits a project for review we want to approve it. Sometimes we’ll come back with suggestions for refining the approach, or adjusting how we measure the impact. But in the end our goal is to fund good ideas.”

As a result of this philosophy, a high percentage of grants submitted for review are ultimately approved for implementation.

“The process is so simple,” says Art teacher Merry Lanker (Stephen Decatur Middle School), a frequent Foundation grant recipient.

Another unique aspect of the Foundation grant program is that teachers are invited to submit each year, without disqualification because a prior project has been approved.

“We have some frequent fliers,” laughs former Foundation Vice Chair and Grant Committee member Mike Allen. “But we invite everyone back to pitch proposals no matter what. We’re looking for impactful projects, and consider each proposal on its own merit. What’s fun is that we’re seeing new teachers each year step up with pitches.”

The ultimate message?

“I encourage fellow teachers to try it once,” says Merry. “Everyone is always surprised by the ease of the process and the high likelihood of success.”



SERVICE IN ACTION

Big Blue Backpacks is a program that represents Millikin University’s “performance learning” mantra to the letter. Professor of Social Work Mary Garrison mentors students who developed this outreach to address food insecurity for students at Dennis Lab School.

Immediately adjacent to the Millikin campus, Dennis affords a walkable option for Millikin undergrads to have a real-life impact on elementary and middle school students. While many of the West End building’s attendees live in households with ample means, a number of their peers face food-insecurity at home. This is particularly acute on weekends, when breakfast and lunch at school aren’t available.

A number of District 61 schools work with local churches or other community partners to address this gap through weekend “backpack” meal programs. At Dennis, Garrison’s Millikin students have independently planned, organized, executed and fund-raised to support this intervention.

WELCOME TO DISTRICT 61

1st Year Teacher grants are a small way of saying “Welcome to District 61!” as well as introducing young educators to the tangible support the Foundation has to offer. Every new teacher is eligible to submit their form for an automatic \$50 to invest as they see fit in setting up their first classroom.

Educators in any setting face challenges. These are magnified in urban school districts where a significant percentage of students live in homes below the poverty line.

“We want new teachers to know that we’re here for them,” says Board Chair Regan Deering, a former biology teacher. “They need to understand right away we are a resource. Teachers starting out also frequently spend their own dollars to set up a classroom, so we try to alleviate at least some of that burden.”

When kids show up without school supplies, for instance, countless educators have stepped in to provide them. Every bit of encouragement counts for those students. Your support for this special initiative helps the Foundation demonstrate the same for teachers!

BUCKET BRIGADE

Attendees at the *Legacy of Learning* banquet had no difficulty identifying when to find their seats. **The Bucket Brigade** entry marked a clear separation between reception and time-to-sit-for-dinner.

Instrumental Music teacher **Sarah Walczyk** established her unconventional percussion ensemble several years ago, then expanded participation through a Foundation grant. Students qualify for the group through consistent good behavior. During rehearsal sessions they create their own grooves, and these compositions become part of public performances.

“We include 4th, 5th and 6th graders from several schools,” Sarah says. “It builds self-confidence and develops a sense of responsibility to the group. We do more than just bang on buckets. We build character.”

On the surface it seems simple: *drumsticks and durable buckets*.

In reality, it means more: *a passionate teacher tapping a creative vibe*.

Learning to follow complex notation means the eyes move across the page, improving reading skills in while also increasing the capacity to keep on task.

“My grades are better from last year,” says Nicholas Freeman. “I stay focused. I don’t look around. I don’t talk to people unless it’s free time.”

“It’s really good because you can express a lot of your energy,” agrees Ziyen Estes. “And Mrs. Walczyk is very kind and nice.”

For students like Tayshaun Caldwell, picking up the rhythm also means he and his peers tap into a sense of self-worth, especially because it’s a challenge at first.

“It’s not very easy for people to start and just get on the beat,” he says. But now, he adds, “I’m a *professional!*”

It’s impossible to overstate the importance of a great teacher’s energy. The Foundation is here to amplify that enthusiasm. *Enhance. Enrich. Engage.* It’s why we exist.

“When you see that lightbulb go on it’s the best feeling in the world,” Sarah sums up, “because you know you’ve opened a door for that student.”

IT'S A GREAT WIDE WORLD

We take a lot for granted in life. Social skills and self-reliance are important to growing up, and harder to develop for students with special needs. For the past several years, instructors at William Harris Alternative Program, Enterprise Montessori and Parsons Elementary have pooled their collective experience to create Community Outings for Essential Skills.

AIKMAN WILDLIFE ADVENTURE

Students experience a wagon tour where they learn about animals native to six different continents, feeding a Bactrian camel by hand from the hay wagon. They walk through the rest of the park checking out other animals like the Zedonk (zebra-donkey), a Watusi African cow, a Silver Fox, a Spotted Hyena, and a Blue Wildebeest. These and more than 50 other living species occupy habitats at the family-run facility. Finally they visit the petting area to get up close and personal with several of the smaller creatures.

THE GREAT PUMPKIN PATCH

Arthur, Illinois

This trip concludes a unit on autumn and pumpkins. Students board a “TGPP Express” and to tour the Patch while learning its history and how pumpkin farming has evolved. They venture into the Great Maize Maze, a full acre cornfield maze with an elevated platform at the center providing a great view of The Patch. They investigate Noah’s Ark, Wanda’s Haunted Crib, TGPP Museum, a restored one-room schoolhouse, the livestock farmyard, a rainbow squash display, and beautiful ornamental gardens. Students take home a TGPP coloring book and pumpkin of their own.

Real Life, Real Skills

Students have benefitted from visiting the Farm Progress Show and multiple restaurants to practice social interactions and learning how to order.

Students working at the Stephen Decatur Middle School **Life Skills Coffee Shop** develop similar skills. Teacher Ashley Zook and colleagues mentor students who run their own business, with startup costs funded through **Wells Fargo Advisors**. Life Skills kids learn to take menu requests from teachers in the building, fill the varying orders and deliver their products to each classroom.

“It’s about learning how to interact in a polite and efficient way,” says Ashley. “These are communication skills they will have to master to be independent as they grow. We’re providing a secure and encouraging environment for them to develop in a healthy manner.”



SUPPORTING CLIMATE AND CULTURE

An anchoring tenet of the District 61 Strategic Plan is providing immersive learning environments for all students in every building.

Some sites highly visible in the community – Dennis Lab School, Johns Hill Magnet School, French STEM Academy (now American Dreamers) and the Montessori program – benefit from built-in family and community support systems. Generating funds to invest in these buildings is generally easier than elsewhere in the District. The high schools, likewise, benefit from a more robust fundraising base.

Conversely, Muffley, Baum, Franklin, Parsons, Oak Grove, Stevenson and South Shores elementary schools, as well as Harris Alternative and Hope Academy, have been less visible to the community and benefit less directly from established partnership funds. Recognizing that fewer external resources exist at the latter nine sites, DPS Foundation Trustees prioritize supporting a positive culture and climate these buildings.

When Covid-19 attendance restrictions relax, the Foundation Board anticipates working directly with each building principal, staff and students at a personal level. True engagement means creating relationships. This direct time investment will inform how we can best promote a positive experience for kids and teachers as they return to the classroom.

While Foundation donors provide encouragement in a wide variety of ways, they all share the same goal: enriching the educational lives of young people on a daily basis.

dps61.org/strategicplan

“Thank you again for sending us to the Illini game. We had SO much fun yesterday! The kids were all so funny, asking where the announcers were sitting and where all the camera people were... and how to talk to the coach to try out for the team...”

- Maggie McCabe,

Life Skills Teacher – MacArthur High School





The Decatur Public Schools Foundation is a privately-funded, tax-exempt organization. Its mission is to acquire and distribute resources to Decatur Public Schools to enhance, enrich and encourage learning opportunities for its students, staff and community. It is directed by a volunteer Board of Trustees and operates independently to generate financial and in-kind support for Decatur Public Schools District 61.