

The Dearborn County Retired Teachers Foundation has granted, with the help of the Dearborn Community Foundation and its very generous business sponsors, fifteen grants to the local schools for the 2024-25 school year.

Andrea Engel-Dixon, Sunman-Dearborn Occupational therapist, Amanda Gulley, Intensive Academic Teacher at North Dearborn Elementary, and Samantha Morgan, Intensive Academic Teacher at North Dearborn Elementary, have received the prestigious \$5000 grant from the **Dearborn Community Foundation** for its development of a neurodiversity-affirming environment to help the autistic and other special needs students in their school.

Kelly Brown's Trojan Nursery, a horticulture center in the East Central High School pre-vocational room with the Applied Nutrition and Wellness class, was funded by the **Sunman-Dearborn Educators Association**. This project is designed to help students practice life-schools in a controlled environment. Students will be growing poinsettias for Christmas, flowers for Mother's Day, and vegetables to prepared nutritious dishes for special meals and treats for the teachers through the coffee cart.

Julie Ernst's Trojan Café Coffee Cart is being sponsored by **Los Primos Mexican Restaurant** in Bright. This program is an immersive learning experience wherein students operate a coffee card that caters to the staff at East Central High School. Students in this class decide what sweet treat to make, take inventory of their supplies, grocery shop, use recipes, take and deliver orders, and learn how to deal with their customers.

The Sunman-Dearborn Educators Association funded Heather Lunsford and Mallory Hummer's Robotics Team at Sunman Elementary School. In this project, students have to design, build, code and drive robot. Students must learn to cooperate as a team.

Jennifer Fischer and Megan Borgman, Greendale Middle School, applied to the **Dearborn County Retired Teachers Foundation** for seven Robotics and Sensor STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering) kits which engage students in hands-on learning which incorporates algebra, geometry, and probability in practical applications. The kits encourage critical thinking, collaboration, and creative problem-solving.

Brenda Osman, East Central High School, has received \$750 from the **Dearborn County Retired Teachers Foundation** for her Future Fashionistas! Project which will extend the Advanced Fashion Classes Fashion Design unit. Here the students can create various designs before making them into full-size designs, thus saving on fabric and other supplies.

Christie Andres, East Central Middle School, has been awarded funding for her Sharon Draper Virtual Author Visit by **Valley Rural Utilities**. Sharon Draper is the author of the award-winning book *Out of My Mind*, which is soon to be made into a movie. During the two

sessions with the author, sixth graders will focus on the writing process and six traits of writing.

Scrabble for a Win! Is being funded by **the Dearborn County Retired Teachers Foundation**. Christina Lecher will use the classic board game at East Central Middle School to compete in weekly Word Challenge Wednesday. Students not involved in that week's challenge will work towards mastering words through a program called Vocabulary.com.

The **Betty McLaughlin Endowment** will sponsor Karen Schebler at Bright Elementary School. Schebler has developed a Family Literacy Nights program to involve parents in their children's academic development. Parents will be invited to participate in a themed book night once a month, which will include a craft and a light snack.

Maxwell Enterprises is funding Sarah Cady, Aurora Elementary School, as she develops her Science of Reading and Flex Seating. The Science of Reading program is a method of teaching reading that stresses phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension in the development of more proficient readers and writers.

St. Lawrence teacher Madeline Sterchi has applied to the **Knights of Columbus** for development of the school's preschool outdoor space which will include a musical wall, a hopscotch area, water table, and a garden for flowers and vegetables, all enclosed with a fence approved by the St. Lawrence administration.

The Dearborn County Retired Teachers Foundation is funding Cathy Bertke, East Central Middle School, for her eighth grade DNA project. In this class students will learn how our DNA makes us. There will be an inherited traits lab wherein they will extract DNA from soybeans, view the DNA under the microscope, and make a candy model of the double helix. Prior to this activity, students will have studied about reproduction and the process of meiosis wherein the egg and sperm unite to form a unique individual. Students will determine their own inherited genetic traits. Twizzlers, toothpicks, and gummy bears will help students make a 3D model of DNA.

St. John Lutheran School teacher Sarah Sharp will receive funding from **CIVISTA** to develop a Mentor Text Project. Studies have shown how negatively COVID impacted the students. The year-long Mentor Text Project will increase student writing instruction and practice through the use of Smekens Education Solutions supplemental picture books which provide a clear understanding of writing samples which the students can use in their own writing.

The team of Brenda Osman, Rachel Mersmann, Joani Radcliffe, and McCord Snider will work together to develop a Trojan Way Leadership Program for East Central High School

and East Central Middle School. Sponsored by **Eric Oatman, SEI Wealth Management**, students in various clubs and sports will receive on-going development training based on the key pillars of leadership, character, and service. School personnel will provide the curriculum, guidance, support and resources needed throughout the process.

Greg Horn, LPL Financial, provided a major portion of the funds needed to honor these teachers, their sponsors, and their guests at the August presentation ceremony.

Any Dearborn County teacher is eligible for the grant money. Applications for the program are given out each January in the area schools. The mission of the Dearborn County Retired Teachers Foundation is to provide innovative and creative learning to the classroom. For information about the program, please contact Director Betty Bourquein, 812-498-2436.