

Re-1J Foundation board pleased with 2011 results

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

Partnering with the Holyoke School District, the Re-1J Foundation, Inc. board of directors is pleased with progress made in the past year for the local schools.

Major areas of impact include the effort to put Promethean Boards (electronic white boards) in classrooms and the track renewal project.

Established funds highlighted by the Foundation include academic, technology and health and wellness.

Continuing to support academic excellence in the classroom, the Foundation has two current academic projects.

One is updating the science lab to include state-of-the-art digital equipment that will translate into real-world applications. The other is updating the library to be a 21st century media center for the most useful research and learning tools.

The technology fund continued with a grant to the school district to accomplish the goal of Promethean Boards in every classroom. Foundation administrator Michelle Van Overbeke said the Foundation looks forward to supporting efforts to give teachers and students 21st century tools to succeed.

In the area of health and wellness, Van Overbeke said the track renewal project is progressing nicely, with an application for a Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) grant pending.

Board changes noted

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Van Overbeke resigned her position as Foundation president when she was elected to the Re-1J Board of Education last November. The bylaws do not allow elected officials to sit on the Foundation board.

Van Overbeke continues to support the Foundation in an administrative role without voting privileges.

Former school board president Dan Kafka took Van Overbeke's place as a Foundation board member.

Glenn Huwa completed his two-year term on the Foundation board, and retired teacher Pat Wiebers took his place as a board member.

Current board of directors for the Re-1J Foundation are Tom Bennett, president; Troy Killin, vice president; Rena Schneller, secretary; and Kafka and Wiebers, directors.

Supt. Bret Miles regularly attends Foundation board meetings and serves in an advisory role.

Van Overbeke pointed out the Foundation doesn't accept applications.

The process to select projects includes input from the school board regarding projects which are needed or would be beneficial at the moment but are not in the school funding schedule.

The Foundation board then discusses and selects from among those the projects which they would like to promote.

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Money donated to the Foundation is safeguarded in one of the established funds (academic, technology, health and wellness or general) per the wishes of the donor. However, the Foundation does not accept donations for specific projects that aren't already approved by the directors.

Fundraising campaign launched last November

A publicity/fundraising campaign was launched by the Foundation last November. It included a limited direct mailing, as well as a newspaper ad.

The results were encouraging, as many residents, as well as alumni, supported the effort, said Van Overbeke. The Foundation raised nearly \$10,000 from 32 different individual donors.

In January, the Foundation was chosen to be the recipient of Monsanto Fund's America's Farmers Grow Communities grant for the second consecutive year. Allen Rafert named the Re-1J Foundation to receive the \$2,500 award.

In 2011, the Foundation was also a recipient from the Heginbotham Trust in the amount of \$5,000 to support the Foundation's mission and the Leland Trust in the amount of \$7,500 for the track project.

In January, the Heginbotham Trust also donated \$50,000 to the track project, which greatly promoted that endeavor.

Van Overbeke said the Foundation website at www.holyokeeducationfoundation.com is the best place to obtain the most current information on projects and Foundation news.

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