



**The Granby Education Foundation Announces Fall 2009 Community Grant Awards**

*by Barbara Cashman*

In keeping with its mission to nourish educational excellence for people of all ages, the GEF is pleased to announce the award of over \$8,160 through its Community Grant Program. In its review of applications, the GEF looks specifically for proposals that illustrate innovation and creativity and offer unique learning opportunities that would not be possible within existing budgets. The GEF found the following proposals to be exceptional.

**The newly formed First Robotics Club of Granby Memorial Middle and Granby Memorial High Schools has received a grant of \$3000 to help fund participation in the First Robotics Program and National Competition.** Granby math teachers Caron Kempf and Margaret Bastiaanse, science teacher Sue Alender, and technology teacher Tim Barnett see Robotics Club as a “tremendous platform for interdisciplinary curriculum opportunities in the future between math, science, and the unified/practical arts.” These four advisors have gathered students passionate about this endeavor and partnered them with parent, past GMHS student, and community mentors with backgrounds in engineering, programming, and finance. Together they will work with real life applications of math, science, technology, project management, and team building to build a common kit robot in a six week timeframe which they will take to national competition in April. For participation in the First Robotics program, schools receive licenses for more than \$60,000 worth of application software which will be available to all students.

**Kelly Lane Intermediate School, at the request of Principal Bob Gilbert, has received \$1500 to introduce a new afterschool enrichment opportunity. “Destination ImagiNation”** is an innovative organization that teaches creativity, teamwork, and problem solving to teams of students in more than 30 countries. The two teams will work to create solutions to Team Challenges, which can have theatrical, structural, improvisational, scientific, or technical focuses. Instant Challenges provide creative quick thinking exercises. Teams of seven students compete regionally with the goal of advancing to the Global Finals. The GEF thanks fifth grade teacher Sarah Chapple, who will coordinate the teams and parent volunteers in this unique experience.

**The GEF was pleased to provide a grant of \$1500 to benefit Granby fifth grade students who will integrate Language Arts and Social Studies during a week-long in-school theater and literacy residency with a teaching artist from Hartford Stage.** Taught by Cynthia Gordon for seven years, the Newbury Award winning novel *My Brother Sam Is Dead* is a story of personal and political conflict in the American Revolution as witnessed by a young man who places freedom before his family. Prior to reading the book, the students explore the central themes of the story through techniques such as improvisation, role-play, tableau, pantomime, and text analysis. The workshop engages students, tapping all

types of intelligence as the students work as an ensemble to consider character motivations, behavior and consequence. Upon completion of the residency, students read the novel and complete response journals. Ms. Gordon stated that “journal entries were detailed, thoughtful, and showed evidence of critical thinking and reasoning at a far more sophisticated level than previous classes. The depth of understanding and connection to the novel following this program was light years beyond anything witnessed in previous classes.”

In a separate focus of the fifth grade curriculum, students learn a basic understanding of how a computer works and how information is processed. Current methods of learning, such as viewing a movie, visiting websites, and looking at computers, may not address the needs of students who learn best in a spatial or kinesthetic “hands-on” manner. To address this need, **Wells Road Intermediate School teacher Kathy Waddington proposed a program through which students will build a computer, then explain the process to their classmates.** The GEF was pleased to grant \$325 for the equipment for this program, and to facilitate Ms. Waddington’s effort to provide a “new method of making learning dynamic, challenging, and hopefully stimulating an interest in lifelong learning.”

“Loss is a life experience that can be very troubling, not only to adults but children as well.” So wrote **Heidi MacDonald, Ph.D., School Psychologist at Wells Road Intermediate School** in her grant proposal. Dr. MacDonald organized the “Live Strong Gang” three years ago as a way for students to find support in their peers who were experiencing grief. To date, the group has had fifteen members who have lost a parent or sibling. It has become increasingly obvious, through the requests of students and families, that more information is needed to better support all students who experience loss and the adults who are in their lives. **The GEF was pleased to grant \$500** to establish a lending library which will assist not only the existing group, but those who may not be comfortable in a group setting. It will also allow faculty access to materials which will allow insight into grief and teach techniques that may help students and families on a day-to-day basis.

In his grant proposal, **Physical Education Teacher Karl Gates** wrote that “kindergarten through second grade levels are the most critical when it comes to physical and mental growth.” Bowling, enjoyed by 50 million players in the United States alone, can greatly improve hand-eye coordination, mental processing, and body movement through muscular development and spatial and self awareness. For those reasons the **GEF has granted \$600 to F.M. Kearns Primary School**, for the purchase of carpet lanes, balls, pins, and related instructional materials.

Since 2006, **Granby Memorial High School (GMHS) has developed a partnership with Bloomfield High School through the state of Connecticut’s Vanguard School Initiative. One facet of this relationship was participation in the Power of Agriculture Lecture Series**, which consisted of monthly lectures and luncheons for students and community members. The lectures, hosted by the two schools, focused on “how individuals, alone and in small groups, can take action on seemingly intractable environmental issues” such as sustainability. These lectures were presented by professional scientists, policy makers and journalists who are nationally recognized as experts in this field. The luncheons were prepared by GMHS culinary students using locally grown produce. Small groups of students and community members worked collaboratively on structured activities to explore each topic. To support the GMHS commitment to a learning community committed to community involvement, and to further the Vanguard mission of promoting diversity and awareness, **the GEF is pleased to grant \$735 for continued participation in the lecture series.** The GEF would like to

recognize **GMHS science teacher Baokhanh Paton for this grant proposal and both Mr. Paton and GMHS culinary teacher Deborah Jacques** for their continued involvement.

The GEF Community Grant Program is open to all public and private non-profit organizations. Proposals, due March 15 and October 15 of each year, should not supplant items covered in existing budgets. To learn more about The Granby Education Foundation and the Community Grant Program, please visit [www.granbyeducationfoundation.org](http://www.granbyeducationfoundation.org) or contact Kimberly Huot at 860.653.5479.