



**A publication
for local
education
foundation
presidents**

Spring 2004

Sand Springs Foundation Wins Medal for Excellence for LEFS

A small-town public school foundation that came to the rescue when its school district suffered from crippling state budget cuts is the winner of this year's Oklahoma Medal for Excellence for Local Education Foundations.

The Sand Springs Education Foundation will receive the award and a \$7,500 cash prize at the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence Academic Awards Banquet on May 22 at the Tulsa Convention Center. Finalists for this year's LEF award are the Bixby Educational Endowment Foundation and the Edmond Public Schools Foundation.

"If there's any foundation I've seen in my 30-year career that deserves recognition, it's the Sand Springs Education Foundation," said district superintendent Lloyd Snow. "Not only do they passionately support our schools every year by way of traditional events, like the Hall of Fame dinners, golf tournaments and grants to our teaching staff, but they have stepped out there this past year and put together Operation Gold Pride ... a

phenomenal campaign of generosity like none that I have ever witnessed. This foundation is the best of the best!"

Since its inception in 1989, the Sand Springs foundation has raised more than \$1.6 million to benefit the approximately 5,400 students in its district. The foundation annually distributes \$35,000 in grants to teachers and school-site grants. In 2003, when state budget cuts forced the closing of a local school and threatened programs throughout the district, the Sand Springs Education Foundation mobilized its community of 17,000 to help shore up the district's general fund through Operation Gold Pride.

Alumnus and real estate developer Mike Case kicked off the \$600,000 campaign with a \$100,000 gift, which was followed by a \$250,000 challenge grant by Sand Springs Home, a local charitable organization.

Contributors to the grassroots campaign ranged from a 6-year-old kindergarten student with a handful of pennies to Gov. Brad Henry, who personally made a

(See Medal Winner, page 4)

Robson To Receive Honorary Medal for Excellence

In recognition of his outstanding service to Oklahoma public education, Claremore businessman, philanthropist and education advocate Frank C. Robson will receive an honorary Medal for Excellence award at the May 22 Academic Awards Banquet.

Robson is only the third person in the history of the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence to receive the honorary distinction. A champion of public education, Robson founded the Claremore Public Schools Foundation and has encouraged the formation and growth of school foundations statewide through his generous sponsorship of the Local Education Foundation Outreach Program of the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence.

The owner of Robson Properties, he is a member and past chairman of the Board of Directors for RCB Bank. Robson's many civic duties include serving on the executive board of Boy Scouts of America Indian Nations Council, as a Foundation for Excellence trustee and a member of the advisory committee for the Dean of Agriculture at Oklahoma State University. He has been presented the OSU Graduate of Distinction Award and has been inducted into the OSU Alumni Association Hall of Fame.

Thank you to these LEFs in the following communities for joining the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence as 2004 annual members. Their gifts help provide training and resources for Oklahoma's growing LEF network.

- Ada**
- Ardmore**
- Bixby**
- Burlington**
- Claremore**
- Cushing**
- Cyril**
- Deer Creek**
- Edmond**
- El Reno**
- Geary**
- Jenks**
- Kingfisher**
- Latta**
- Miami**
- Mid-Del**
- Muskogee**
- Norman**
- Okarche**
- Okemah**
- Okmulgee**
- Poteau**
- Purcell**
- Putnam City**
- Sallisaw**
- Sand Springs**
- Shawnee**
- Skiatook**
- Stillwater**
- Stroud**
- Tulsa-Booker**
- T. Washington**
- Watonga**
- Yukon**

Revisiting Past Medal Winning LEFS

We recently queried past Medal for Excellence winning LEFs to get an update on their activities. Here's a sampling of some of their successful fundraisers and projects:

Supporting Teacher Certification

The Oklahoma City Public Schools Foundation, through its Jean F. Gumerson Endowment, awards scholarships to support teachers in attaining their National Board Certification, which costs \$2,300. The funds generated by the endowment pay \$2,000 of the total cost in the form of grants, with the teachers paying the balance of \$300.

In return, certified teachers commit to continue teaching in the Oklahoma City Public Schools for five years. The goal of the endowment is \$1 million dollars, which will generate \$50,000 a year to help 25 teachers each year in attaining the certification. Currently, pledges totaling \$500,000 have been received, reported new executive director Jennifer Garner.



Ronald Roberts' rendering of Roots and Wings was created in 1987 to honor Medal for Excellence winners.

tion and review process. In 2002-03, the foundation awarded 112 Fast Track grants totaling more than \$56,000, in addition to its traditional Grants to Teachers. While state funding has improved some this year, the Claremore foundation continues to provide Fast Track grants.

The Quest for Excellence

The Duncan Public Schools Foundation is gearing up for its second annual Quest for Excellence Golf Tournament on April 23 at the Duncan Golf and Country Club, reported executive director Debbie Parks. Proceeds from the event support the Quest for Excellence Program, which provides professional development funds for teachers and administrators. Last year, the foundation was able to send two Duncan teachers to the International Reading Conference.

A Legacy for the Arts

When Stillwater citizens approved a bond issue supporting the construction of a high school performing arts center, the Stillwater Public Education Foundation recognized that it would take far more than bricks and mortar to make the facility a success. Thus, they created the Performing Arts Center Endowment to support programming and special equipment needs. As part of the endowment, the foundation launched the Family Legacy Program to recognize donors of \$25,000 or more. In addition, they hosted a benefit concert featuring the renowned rock band the All-American Rejects. The band, which includes two Stillwater alumni, helped raise an additional \$19,000 for the performing arts endowment.

Help Where It's Needed Most

In 2002, the Claremore Public Schools Foundation launched its Volunteers in Education Program. The goal of the program, which now has more than 40 volunteers, is to provide weekly assistance to elementary classroom teachers by working one-on-one or with small groups of students on special projects or everyday activities.

In response to budget cuts, the Claremore foundation also started a "Fast Track" fundraising and grant program to help meet needs for immediate funding, particularly in the areas of libraries, science labs, the arts and academic field trips. The group developed a single-page grant application to expedite the applica-

Director's Thoughts

Keeping Oklahoma's LEFs Thriving

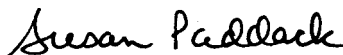
Just when I think there couldn't be many more communities wishing to start a foundation, the phone rings. This year has brought many calls. Drumright, Waurika, Pioneer-Pleasant Vale and Newcastle have all expressed interest in starting foundations.

It is extremely satisfying to work with these groups. They benefit from the years of accumulated knowledge and experience of the other 161 established LEFs. They receive the best ideas from the most successful LEFs in the state. It exemplifies why Oklahoma's LEF movement is thriving. We constantly learn from each other and that information exchange allows each foundation to be more effective than it could be working in isolation. Our network and the resources we provide through the OFE are also the reasons other states look to us for

assistance.

One of the important services we provide is the collection of information that shows the impact that LEFs are making. We collect this information through the annual survey that was started in 1998. This year's survey was sent to presidents in early March. If you haven't already done so, please take the time to complete the survey. Your foundation's information is vital to show the collective impact of our LEFs statewide.

As always, we are here to be of help. In addition to the start-up groups, I facilitate retreats for established foundations wishing to fine-tune the work of their board. Your foundation's success makes our network even stronger. Thanks for all you do for Oklahoma's children!



Susan Paddack, Director of LEF Outreach

Letter to the Editor

The Oklahoma Arts Institute seeks to provide programs of excellence in arts education for Oklahoma and the region in order to develop future artists and arts audiences. These goals are realized through our summer program for Oklahoma high school students, and are further achieved through our Oklahoma Fall Arts Institute for adult artists and educators.

Public school teachers receive scholarship funding through the State Department of Education and private matching funds secured by the Arts Institute to attend our programs. Over the years, the Arts Institute has received overwhelming feedback from public educators about the impact the workshops have had on their classrooms. Our goal is to make our programs available to more teachers across the state.

As local education foundations develop budgets, our hope is that the LEFs will consider underwriting the cost of substitutes to allow teachers to attend the Fall Arts Institutes. We ask that funds be provided directly to schools. We have been advised that the expense of a substitute has prevented many interested educators from participating in this staff development opportunity.

Sincerely,



Nance Diamond
President, Oklahoma Arts Institute

MATCHING GRANTS AVAILABLE TO LEFS

The Communities Foundation of Oklahoma has a new matching grant program to help LEFs increase their endowments. One-time awards ranging from \$10,000 to \$25,000 will be available to LEFs that establish endowments at the Communities Foundation. To qualify, LEFs must have total assets exceeding \$100,000. For information, contact **Susan R. Graves** at (405) 488-1450 or toll-free (877) 689-7726 or e-mail sgraves@cfok.org.

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News for Local Education Foundation Presidents

If you are no longer president, please notify the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence and pass this newsletter on to the new president. Please feel free to copy this newsletter for your board.

Medal Winner

(Continued from Page 1)

contribution and attended a reception that earned some \$12,000. Benefit concerts by Broadway star Sam Harris raised \$50,000, a "Generosity Ball" raised more than \$10,000, and piggy banks placed in local businesses generated more than \$3,000. In less than nine months, the Sand Springs Education Foundation successfully rallied the community to exceed its goal and deliver a \$636,000 care package for Sand Springs schools.

Lisa Riggs, immediate past president of the foundation, said Operation Gold Pride not only raised needed funds for the schools, but it significantly expanded community awareness of the foundation and its mission. "Because of the variety of fundraising activities that we offered, we were able to involve businesses, the general public, even people who don't have kids in school.

"The challenge for our foundation now is to not let the awareness and enthusiasm generated by Operation Gold Pride die on the vine," she added. "We are working to think of creative ways to keep the community involved."

Fall Forum Committee Seeks Ideas From Small LEFS

Planning is under way for the 2004 Fall Forum for Local Education Foundations, which will be held Oct. 27 at the Oklahoma Memorial Union on OU's Norman campus. The one-day networking and training event will feature concurrent tracks with information on fundraising, board development, foundation issues and teacher enrichment.

The Fall Forum Committee would like to offer a new session geared toward the needs of small LEFs. If you have a topic you would like to have addressed in this session or ideas for other Fall Forum activities, please contact Fall Forum chairs Susan Bowers at jbowers7@cox.net or Scott Jones at scottjones@banksnb.com.