

Education Foundation

Delivering world-class learning opportunities

By LISA RHODES

THANKS TO OVERWHELMING community support, the Education Foundation of Martin County is celebrating a remarkable year! A \$600,000 year!

Founded over 23 years ago, the Education Foundation is a nonprofit, community investment organization comprised of business leaders, community volunteers, and school officials who share a goal of enriching and enhancing the quality of education for all students in Martin County.

Through effective fundraising, positive collaborative partnerships, innovative programming and efficient allocation of resources, we can provide world-class learning experiences right here in area schools.

“Over the last eight years, the Education Foundation has seen an increase in private donations of more than 1,200 percent, with 94 percent of funds going to more than 15 different programs across all academic subjects,” said Education Foundation president Raúl Ocampo.

“This is a great achievement and a testimony to our community’s commitment to education.”

This year, the foundation awarded over \$50,000 in Innovative Project Grants supporting a wide range of programs, including MakerSpace at Palm City Elementary, providing the space and resources for students to create projects using 3D printing, robotics, circuitry, software and hardware design, recycled materials, and more.

Grants also funded professional development at Bessey Creek Elementary; the Robo-Engineering Lab at Crystal Lake Elementary; an expanded robotics curriculum at Dr. David L. Anderson Middle School; 30 digital tablets at Stuart Middle School; and a schoolwide force and motion project at JD Parker School of Science, Math & Technology, complete with books, rockets, drones and a GoPro camera.

Dr. Christopher Jones, principal at JD Parker, said, “The support we receive from the Education Foundation of Martin County makes outside the box learning possible for our kids.”

Because the Education Foundation believes the arts promote creativity, and creativity is key to innovation, the nonprofit provides unique opportunities for students to work alongside professional artists through a partnership with the county’s Arts in Public Places program.

As part of the Education Foundation artist residency program, students are treated to special performances.

In addition, the Education Foundation also fielded 16 local robotics teams at both the elementary and middle school levels, with the Hidden Oaks Middle School “Masters of the Grid” rookie team taking home the championship title at the regional qualifying tournament.

Just this year alone, the “Get on the Bus, Martin!” program and its three online modules, Fund-a-Project, Adopt-a-Class, and Community Opportunities, have infused local classrooms with over \$115,000 in resources, keeping teachers from digging into their own pockets to meet classroom needs.

By bringing engineers into middle and high school algebra classrooms to engage in problem solving workshops, the Education Foundation is answering the age old question, “When am I ever going to use algebra?” Within 20 minutes, students are designing traffic patterns and water retention ponds, and learning about nutrient loading and flight mission fuel burn calculations — putting everyday algebra to good use.

The Education Foundation also hosts the Elementary Book Bowl and the annual

These programs really deliver. Student motivation skyrockets, enthusiasm builds, grades go up, test scores rise, and students discover how their lessons in school tie into the world.

Teacher of the Year Awards Celebration. None of these opportunities would be possible without our supporters, donors, and teachers. Thank you for making this a record year at the Education Foundation.

For more information, please visit www.EducationFoundationMC.org.



Raul Ocampo and Ryan Strom with a \$600,000 check representing the amount of financial support provided this school year by the Education Foundation to Martin County schools.

On our cover: Education Foundation of Martin County stakeholders at the new MakerSpace at Palm City Elementary: (back) Tony Ferro, Harold Tourjee, Tina McSoley, Vera Rowell, Kevin Johnson, Chase Russell, Raul Ocampo, Leigh Anne Pike, Ryan Strom, Nancy Marin, Denise Harrison, Courtney O’Neal, Patrick Murray, Chris Jones, Bonnie Kronk and Mary Sue Gulick; (front) Alex Wernick, Shane Berhoff, Abigail Grazi, Tristan Van and Laurali Firestone.