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\$53,614 AWARDED IN LARGEST ROUND OF GOLD STAR GRANT FUNDING EVER FROM THE LA CROSSE PUBLIC EDUCATION FOUNDATION

LA CROSSE, WI, MARCH 13, 2024 – Made possible through generous community support, La Crosse Public Education Foundation is proud to announce the largest round of Gold Star Grants funding ever with \$53,614 awarded for 20 projects. Funded grants provide students and teachers a chance to expand their skills, be exposed to novel experiences, and to engage with unique ideas --- everything from Hixon Forest and Milwaukee field trips, to an author visit, and a student-published magazine.

"LPEF is honored to support the excellent educators in the School District of La Crosse as they demonstrate innovative dedication to engaging their students in learning," said President of the La Crosse Public Education Foundation Board of Directors, Heidi Odegaard. "We're grateful for the community support that makes these projects possible and helps to give La Crosse public school students access to enhanced educational experiences at every grade level in our district."

Gold Star Grants are selected for funding based on creativity, the ability to engage students, and the total impact or reach of the project throughout the district. Included below is a summary of the 20 grants, including three awarded to learning partner organizations:

- \$5000 - Funds the purchase of a hydroponics tower, seeds, and other supplies for the Agriculture department at both Central and Logan High School. The hydroponics tower will help to teach students year round about growing plants and the benefits. Recipient: Brooks Lueck.
- \$5000 - Provides funding to bring artist Julia Crozier to Summit Elementary to paint a mural (with students' help) on the new outdoor classroom, which will be built with funding by Solar on La Crosse Schools (SOLS). Recipients: Oscar Uribe and Johnnyray Wildt. *This grant is underwritten in part by the Rachel Gundersen Endowment for the Arts & Humanities and Dr. Gunnar and Mary Baldwin Gundersen Memorial Fund of La Crosse Community Foundation.*
- \$5000 - Provides funding to bring award-winning author and poet Candice Iloh to speak to all La Crosse high school students and staff during a two-day author visit in Spring 2025. Iloh writes coming-of-age novels and poetry that "captures the nuance of young Black life." Recipients: Kristi Moulton, Abby Von Arx, and Linda Jerome. *This grant is underwritten in part by the Heather & Stephen Ross and Maureen & Robert Freedland LPEF Fund for Diversity Education of the La Crosse Community Foundation.*

- \$4800 - Establishes a summer enrichment course that will culminate in the publication of a magazine produced entirely by students. Students gain the experience of publishing from start to finish and the broader community will benefit from hearing the voices of young people in our area. Recipient: Lissa Carlson. *This grant is underwritten in part by the Randy and Lynn Nelson Fund.*
- \$4795 - Funds the purchase of a trailer for 10-12 canoes at Summit Environmental School to take students canoeing in the Upper Mississippi National Wildlife Refuge in front of the school. Recipients: Oscar Uribe and Nick O'Keefe.
- \$4510 - Contributes to enhancing or expanding pollinator patches at North Woods, Hamilton, and Hintgen elementary school garden sites. The project will engage students with hands-on seed-to-table nutrition and environmental stewardship education. Recipients: Bonnie Martin and Kari Bersagel Braley of GROW La Crosse.
- \$3760 - Provides funding to purchase an electric guitar and bass guitar package for use in Logan High School's new Modern Music Ensemble - Rock Band course. The goal of this class is to provide a performing music course for students that love music, but never fit neatly into the typical performing courses. Recipients: Brian Renkas and Zach Mayer.
- \$3000 - Provides funding for 14 teachers to attend a 2-day training for Bal-A-Vis-X hosted by the school district. These teachers would be eligible to pursue the process to become a Bal-A-Vis-A school trainer for the district. Bal-A-Vis-X stands for Balance, Auditory, Vision, Exercises. Teachers who are using Bal-A-Vis-X are noticing improved attention, self control, and engagement in their classrooms. Recipient: Barbara Oettel. *This grant is underwritten in part by the Richard Swantz Fund.*
- \$2878 - Funds the purchase of outdoor gear for Longfellow Middle School's Outdoor Adventure Club to hold a summer "Backpacking 101" course. This course will teach students basic skills and knowledge necessary to safely participate in overnight adventures in the outdoors. Recipients: Clinton Grabhorn and Lila Planavsky. *This grant is underwritten in part by the Tyser Power of Nature Fund.*
- \$2700 - Funds the purchase of personal books for K-2 students at Northside and Hamilton Elementary participating in the collaborative UW-La Crosse and Boys and Girls Club Reading Buddies collaborative after-school program. Recipients: Caryn Peterson (UWL), Teigen Meiners (Boys & Girls Club), and Denise Rueter (UWL).
- \$2443 - Establishes an adapted book library within the Hintgen Elementary school library, providing tailored reading materials to meet the diverse needs of students. The adapted library can enhance the educational experiences of students, promote literacy development, and foster a more inclusive learning environment. Recipients: Emily Juneau, Jill Utz Lebakken, and Hannah Gaska.

- \$2386 - Funds the purchase of a floor loom and two tapestry looms for Logan High School's new Fiber Arts Exploration course, which will provide students with hands-on experience in weaving traditions from diverse cultures. Recipients: Allecia Kruser.
- \$1300 - Funds the purchase of styluses for art students at Logan and Central High Schools for use with their iPads. Recipients: Bethany Nugent and Allecia Kruser.
- \$1200 - Provides funding for all Hamilton Elementary students to visit Hixon Forest 2 times during the school year. These field trips will help expand the students' view of the community, increase vocabulary in relation to the surrounding nature, and show students how nature can help them feel better physically and mentally. Recipient: Jenn Speckeen. *This grant is underwritten in part by the Duane and Carol Taebel Fund of La Crosse Community Foundation.*
- \$1000 - Provides funding to purchase materials needed for a new Outdoor Literature class at Logan High School. The goal of this class is to improve students' relationship with reading while providing opportunities for outdoor recreation and immersion. Recipient: Logan Fulton.
- \$1000 - Provides funding for students in the Sports & Entertainment Marketing classes at Central and Logan High schools to attend a field trip to Milwaukee where they will tour Fiserv Forum, attend a Brewers Game, and possibly tour the Business School at UW-Milwaukee. Recipients: Joanna Carman and Jamee Houchins. *This grant is underwritten in part by the Judy and Randy Eddy Sr. Fund.*
- \$925 - Funds the purchase of vertical rolling whiteboards that will allow Logan Middle teachers to create thinking spaces for students to stand and collaboratively problem-solve and work together during designated times in their classes. Recipients: Megan Burke, Ashley Burke, and Karla Lawrence. *This grant is underwritten in part by the Judy and Dave Bouffleur Fund of La Crosse Community Foundation.*
- \$866 - Provides funding for La Crosse Promise to take juniors and seniors on a field trip to tour UW-Eau Claire and the University of Minnesota. Recipient: Aaron Czappa of La Crosse Promise.
- \$688 - Funds the purchase of high-visibility vests, raincoats, umbrellas, gloves, and hats for 4th and 5th grade Safety Patrol students at Spence Elementary. The Safety Patrol job allows students to build their leadership skills. Recipient: Jocelyn Buxton.
- \$363 - Provides funding to purchase sustainable materials needed for students in the Central High School Special Education Program to learn how to make, package, and distribute basic food products. These practices create learning opportunities to foster independence within their home and to master job skills. Recipient: Stephanie Mick. *This grant is underwritten in part by the Tom and Judy Sleik Family Fund of La Crosse Community Foundation.*

The **La Crosse Public Education Foundation** strives to enhance learning opportunities for students in the School District of La Crosse while promoting community support and understanding of public education. Founded in 1988 by forward-looking residents passionate about public education, the Foundation invests in innovation for fresh, creative programs and curriculum unable to be funded through the district's already tight budget.

Through LPEF, community members and organizations efficiently and effectively put support for public education into action. LPEF awards more than \$90,000 in grants annually to dozens of school projects ranging from bringing artists and authors to the district, to providing study trips to Chicago and Minneapolis. More than \$1.2 million in grant funding has been awarded since LPEF's founding.

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