

# Newsletter **UPDATE**

[www.SFEducationFoundation.org](http://www.SFEducationFoundation.org)

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## Major fundraising campaign nears exciting conclusion

One of the Education Foundation's biggest fundraising campaigns will reach a happy conclusion for two lucky people during the Presidents' Bowl football games on Sept. 7 at Howard Wood Field.

That's when two buyers of \$10 raffle tickets will win \$5,000 each.

The winners will be announced during the halftimes of two highly anticipated high school football games at the 22nd Annual Presidents' Bowl: O'Gorman will play Lincoln at 4 p.m., and Roosevelt will play Washington at 7 p.m.

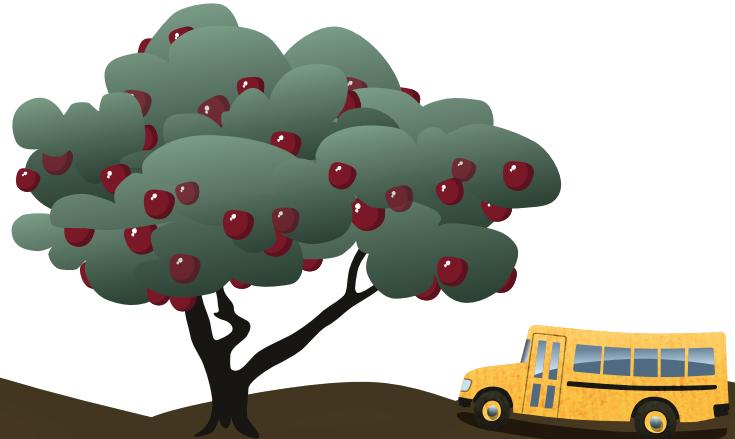
The raffle raises thousands of dollars for the Foundation's Cash for Classrooms program. Tickets can be purchased for \$10 each at Lewis stores or from members of the Education Foundation Board.

Money raised through the Cash for Classrooms campaign supports the overall mission of the Foundation and its programs.

Fittingly, the winners of last year's raffle set aside much of their winnings for educational purposes.

Kaelyn Larson acquired one of last year's winning tickets. Her parents, Jeff and Serenity Larson, put the money in her college fund.

Kaelyn, a graduate of Roosevelt High School, plans to attend South Dakota State University this fall. (continued on Page 2)



## Check out our new website

The Education Foundation's website has been refreshed and relaunched. Check it out at [www.SFEducationFoundation.org](http://www.SFEducationFoundation.org).

The new site includes information about Education Foundation programs, board members, the Sioux Falls School District and other items of interest.

We would like to thank Blend Interactive for helping us update the website.

"We were excited to partner with the Sioux Falls Public Schools Education Foundation to provide web guidance and design for their new site," says Corey Vilhauer, content specialist at Blend Interactive. "We believe in the mission of the SFPSEF and are happy to help them in any way we can."

## Donations welcome

The Sioux Falls Public Schools Education Foundation is a nonprofit organization endorsed by the Sioux Falls School District. Our objective is to help students, teachers and schools.

We operate with our own board of directors to enhance educational opportunities and promote student achievement by supporting academic projects and activities not supported by tax dollars.

Tax-deductible gifts to the Education Foundation are welcome. Volunteer help is welcome, too.

Questions about donations may be directed to the Sioux Falls Area Community Foundation, phone (605) 336-7055.

Questions about Education Foundation programs and volunteering may be directed to [SFEducationFoundation@gmail.com](mailto:SFEducationFoundation@gmail.com)

## Major fundraising campaign nears exciting conclusion (continued)

“It was a nice little win,” Jeff Larson says.

The other winning ticket was purchased by Donna VanBockern.

She bought each of her two children an iPad for Christmas and put the rest of the money in their college funds.

“My kids were happy that I won,” VanBockern says.

In addition to revenue from raffle sales, the Cash for Classrooms program benefits from contributions from major sponsors. This year’s three major sponsors are: SDN Communications, First National Bank in Sioux Falls and Billion Automotive. They contributed \$5,000 each.

SDN also contributed \$5,000 last year for Cash for Classrooms. The company also has contributed for several years to the Innovation in Education grants program.

SDN provides broadband connectivity to almost every K-12 school in South Dakota, says Vernon Brown, director of marketing and community relations for SDN.

“We truly believe that everything we can give back helps the economy and future workforce development. It’s a way of giving back to the communities that have helped SDN grow,” says Brown, who is also a member of the Education Foundation Board.

The First National Bank in Sioux Falls also is a repeat donor to the Cash for Classrooms program and a contributor to Innovation in Education grants.

“The program that it’s funding is reaching so many kids. I think that’s why we were attracted to both sponsorships,” says Stephanie Gongopoulos, executive vice president of the First National Bank in Sioux Falls.

Gongopoulos, the mother of an 11-year-old daughter, also serves on the Foundation Board.

Billion Automotive also is contributing for a second time to Cash for Classrooms.

David R. Billion, vice president of the dealership, attended public schools, mostly in Sioux Falls. He also has taught Junior Achievement for 10 years, so he’s spent a lot of time in Sioux Falls classrooms.

He appreciates the efforts of teachers and points out that some of them spend their own money to supplement instructional materials for their classrooms.



Kaelyn Larson (left) acquired one of last year’s winning raffle tickets. Her parents put the money in her college fund. Donna VanBockern bought the other winning ticket and put some of the money in her children’s college funds.

“The teachers do a great job. They put a lot of blood, sweat and tears into this education process,” Billion says.

In addition, he wants to help the community develop a strong workforce.

“It’s important to see that students who become the future employees in Sioux Falls are well educated,” Billion says.

David Heflin, who chairs the Foundation Board, says contributions from donors have a significantly positive impact on the quality of education in the Sioux Falls School District.

“I have served on the Foundation Board for a number of years, and I have had the privilege of seeing firsthand the impact of these dollars on students and classrooms,” Heflin says.

“What is also a lot of fun is to watch is the impact of our programs on teachers and sponsors. The teachers appreciate the fact that our sponsors want to help our children. Our sponsors not only want to impact our students’ lives, they also want to show their appreciation to our teachers for all of their efforts,” he says.



## Grants help teachers improve reading-by-listening program

For teachers Jeannie Rahm and Kris Hansen, winning Innovation in Education grants from the Education Foundation was like Christmas.

"It was huge. It was like Santa came," Hansen says.

Hansen and Rahm, who teach first grade at Rosa Parks Global Studies / World Language Elementary School, each received about \$850 from the Education Foundation to help improve their reading programs.

Listening to good, fluent readers read books out loud helps pupils learn, the two teachers say. So, they purchased 21 iPods, with splitters. That allows 42 children at a time to listen and follow along to books being read by authors and others.

The teachers also bought 80 to 100 additional books on CD to enhance their small collections of listening material.

"It was like Christmas," Rahm says. "This is something we never would have been able to do on our own."

Rahm and Hansen appreciate the contributions from businesses and other donors who fund the grants.

The teachers started to implement their improved "Listen to Reading" program at the end of last school year. However, the benefits really will take hold for this school year's incoming class of first-graders, they say.

About 75 children a year are expected to benefit from the enhanced reading program.

"Some of our kids don't have the opportunity at home to hear someone fluent read to them," Hansen says. "They are going to be so excited when they get to sit down and listen to books."

The grants received by Hansen and Rahm were among 36 awarded by the Education Foundation during the 2012-2013 school year. The grants totaled \$34,841 – roughly half the total grant requests.

The funding for Innovation in Education grants comes from sources such as business sponsors and individual gifts. The grants are designed for innovative educational programs not funded by tax dollars.

Teachers at any grade level who are employed by the Sioux Falls School District are welcome to apply. Grants are awarded through a competitive process. The deadline for applications for the coming school year is Sept. 30.



For Kris Hansen, a teacher at Rosa Parks, winning a grant for a reading program was like receiving a gift.



Jeannie Rahm, also a teacher at Rosa Parks, says the money was used to improve a "Listen to Reading" program.

For judging criteria and other information about the grant program, see [www.SFEducationFoundation.org](http://www.SFEducationFoundation.org)



## Passion for education comes naturally for Meredith Larson

Meredith Larson isn't the type of community leader who had to be convinced to help students, teachers and schools in the Sioux Falls School District. His desire came naturally.

After moving to Sioux Falls from the Phoenix area, Larson started looking for ways that he could help education in the community.

"In my mind, it's just real hard not to want to help kids and teachers get better. It's a no-brainer," he says.

Larson, the current vice chair, has served as an unpaid member of the Education Foundation Board since 2005. He is completing his final year of service.

Larson, 63, also has served as a volunteer on the City Planning Commission, which makes recommendations on land use and zoning matters for Sioux Falls.

He works as the vice president of pre-construction services for Henry Carlson Company, one of the largest construction companies in the region. Before joining Carlson more than six years ago, he was as an architect at TSP Inc.

The North Dakota native and his wife Sharon moved to Sioux Falls from Arizona in about 2000, after their children had grown up.

Larson had served on the board of an educational organization in Paradise Valley, Ariz.

"When I got here, I started digging around to see if there was any organization in play. I just have a passion for education and appreciate what students can do," he says.

The Education Foundation existed but was a relatively low-key organization until after Pam Homan became superintendent of the Sioux Falls School District in 2004. Larson joined the Foundation Board about a year later.

When he initially joined, the Foundation's emphasis was on building the organization's endowment. However, donors were more interested in contributing to specific projects. So, the Foundation shifted its approach to fundraising, Larson says.

He would like to see more young parents and alums of Sioux Falls schools get interested in Education Foundation activities.

"I've enjoyed my time on the Education Foundation Board. I sense they are in great hands with the new people that have come on the board. It's fun to watch their enthusiasm," he says. "I'll do everything I can when I leave to stay involved."

## Our Mission

The mission of the Sioux Falls Public Schools Education Foundation is to enhance educational opportunities and promote achievement among all students by supporting academic projects and activities not funded by tax dollars.

It is our belief that the good life we share here is a reflection of the quality education our students receive in our local public schools.

The Education Foundation is administered by an advisory board that is comprised of community leaders, parents, School Board members, and current and retired district teachers and administrators.



Meredith Larson has served on the Education Foundation Board since 2005. This will be his final year of volunteer service. "I've enjoyed my time on the Education Foundation Board. I sense they are in great hands with the new people that have come on the board," says Larson, the current vice chair.

In addition to Meredith Larson, members of the Education Foundation Board are:

- Vernon Brown
- Catherine Dekkenga
- Diane Dietsch
- Doug Erickson
- Twaine Fink
- Stephanie Gongopoulos
- David Heflin
- Steve Herman
- Dawn Jensen
- DeeAnn Konrad

- Wendy McDonnel
- Pamela Miller
- Mike Moore
- Kate Parker
- Anne Powers
- Cathy Regas
- Justin L. Reilly
- Amy Scott-Stoltz
- Dan Statema

