

Teachers from Roosevelt High School earn four grants for innovative teaching projects

By the start of the 2016-2017 school year, Jessica Pomeranke hopes to have 16 new Boogie Boards fully connected for use in her classroom at Roosevelt High School.

Boogie Boards are notebook-sized, interactive white boards that can wirelessly transfer images to other devices. The boards enable students to see each other's math work and discuss it.

"It's just a really cool way for students to hold their peers accountable and edit their work," says Pomeranke, who teaches accelerated geometry and algebra 1.

She was awarded a \$2,500 Innovation in Education grant this year from the Education Foundation. She used the grant to buy 16 Boogie Boards and cases.

A Bluetooth adapter also was acquired to enable students to transfer and save their work to Pomeranke's desktop computer.

"This use of technology is a new way for students to explore multiple pathways of learning," she says.



Jessica Pomeranke received a \$2,500 grant to buy interactive Boogie Boards for students to use in her mathematics classes.

Pomeranke was among 18 recipients of Innovation in Education Grants for the 2015-2016 school year. The awards totaled a record high of \$47,815.

Roosevelt won the most grants of any school – four. In addition to Pomeranke, the four grant winners from Roosevelt and the title of their projects were:

- Diedra Nissen (Nspire & Navigate)
- Darryl Dubs and Bridget Jacobs (Picturing Engagement)
- Penny Johnson (R3 Academic Proficiency and Personal Development)

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Payroll deduction adds up to 'significant' donation

Todd Thielke has been making regular donations to the Education Foundation for about four years. He started when he first got elected to the Sioux Falls School Board. He contributes \$20 a month from his school check.

"I think it's a great place to donate some money," Thielke says.

Thielke didn't initially realize that he would get paid for serving on the School Board. Members do get paid, though not a lot. They currently are entitled to file for \$75 for each day they attend meetings related to school business.

He is among a few employees of the school district who make regular, payroll contributions to the Education Foundation, which is a nonprofit organization endorsed by the school district but separate from it.

Thielke, who is also a real estate broker with Hegg Realtors, decided to start contributing regularly to the Education Foundation when he was filling out payroll documents related to serving on the School Board. That's when he learned about the innovative projects that the Education Foundation funds.

The Education Foundation raises private money to fund competitive grants for teachers who come up with innovative teaching projects. The organization also helps first-time teachers with \$100 grants to buy classroom supplies. The Education Foundation funds projects not funded by public tax dollars.

The organization partners with the Sioux Falls Area Community Foundation to accept donations, including payroll deductions from a few employees of the School District.

"When made on a monthly basis, a donation of \$10 or \$20 adds up to a significant annual contribution, says Regina Q. Jahr, vice president for development at the Community Foundation.

Jahr suggests that people interested in making a regular payroll deduction to benefit the Education Foundation contact their payroll office or the Education Foundation.

Payroll deduction is just one of the contribution avenues that the Education Foundation would like to increase.

Other ways to donate include through a beneficiary designation in a will, insurance policy, retirement plan or other financial vehicle.

Thielke says other members of the School Board contribute to Education Foundation in various ways. "I think we all understand the importance of the Education Foundation."



Todd Thielke

Here's how you can help

The Sioux Falls Public Schools Education Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization endorsed by the Sioux Falls School District.

Individuals and business representatives with questions about donation options may write the Education Foundation at sfeducationfoundation@gmail.com. They also may call the Sioux Falls Area Community Foundation at 605-336-7055.

Regular or one-time donations may be mailed to the Education Foundation at PO Box 560, Sioux Falls, SD 57101.



3 new members join Education Foundation Board of Directors

A school administrator, foundation executive and a teacher have joined the Education Foundation Board of Directors. The new members are: Nancy Hagen, Deb Koski and Kiki Nelsen. They bring a mix of experience and skills to the Board.

Hagen is the principal at John Harris Elementary School. Serving on the Board provides her an opportunity to connect the community to classrooms, she says. "Ultimately the reason I'm serving on that Board is that it's another capacity to serve children," she says.

Hagen is especially interested in advancing literacy among students. She and her husband, Dana, are the parents of 11-year-old twins.

Hagen has worked in administrative and teaching positions for 25 years. In addition to about 20 years for four schools the Sioux Falls District, she worked as a teacher in suburban Chicago and in Jasper, Minn. She is in her seventh year at John Harris.

Koski is the chief operating officer of the Sanford Health Foundation. "I've always been interested in education. What really ignited my interest was when my kids qualified for gifted education. I don't pay anything extra for that. It's amazing," she says.

She wants to give something back to the district and help enhance the entire school system. "The opportunities our kids have to get a specialized education kind of blow me away," she says. "I really think we have something special here. That's what I'm excited about."

Koski grew up on a farm and learned how to work hard. She is a Yankton native and a graduate of the University of South Dakota. She and her husband, Sheldon, have two school-aged boys.

Nelsen is a mathematics teacher and National Honor Society adviser at Roosevelt High School. "This is a place I thought I could make an immediate difference to support teachers in the district and, as a parent of future attendees, anything I can do is of high importance to me," Nelsen says.

Nelsen is a graduate of Sioux Falls Washington and the University of Nebraska - Lincoln. She earned a master's degree at the University of South Dakota. She has taught at Roosevelt for nine years. She and her husband, Derek, have two children who are not in school yet.

"The Foundation is doing a great job of supporting teachers. It would be great to continue doing that, and do it at a bigger level," she says.

Other members of the Board are: Peggy Baney, Vernon Brown (vice chair), Catherine Dekkenga (secretary), Jackie Dumansky, Nancy Duncan, Stephanie Gongopoulos (chair), John Hedrick, Teresa Jackson, DeeAnn Konrad, Justin Reilly (treasurer) and Carly Reiter.



Nancy Hagen



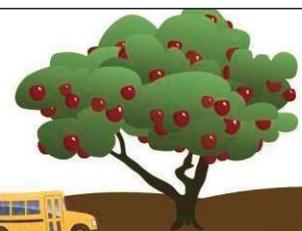
Deb Koski



Kiki Nelsen

Our Mission

The mission of the 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.



Biology teacher from Washington High is district's new Teacher of the Year

Janet Swier teaches nearly 100 students at Washington High School, and she tries get to know them inside and outside the classroom.

As well as build trust with them in her classes, she likes to attend her students' high school activities. Building good relationships with students is the key to effective teaching, she says.

"It pays dividends down the road," says Swier, who in March was named the Dr. John W. Harris Teacher of the Year at the 28th annual awards ceremony.

Swier is completing her 19th year at Washington. She teaches freshmen biology. She has chaired the Science Department at Washington for more than 10 years. She also previously taught for two years in Slayton, Minn.

The Humboldt, S.D. native earned her undergraduate degree at South Dakota State University and her master's degree at Augustana University. She is married and has two children.

As the 2016 Teacher of the Year, she was awarded \$4,000 from sponsor Vern Eide Motorcars and a plaque. She expects spend some of the money on braces for her children.

"She has demonstrated her effectiveness as a leader and serves in that capacity through collaboration, professional development and delivery by creating high expectations in a risk-free and safe learning environment," said Jamie Nold, Swier's principal.

Criteria for the award included commitment to lifelong learning, effectiveness in meeting students' needs, impact on student achievement, effectiveness of home-school cooperation and community involvement to promote school-community relations.

Swier enjoys teaching freshmen because students are excited to be in high school and yet eager to learn.

She also praised her fellow honorees. "It's humbling to be in such good company," she said.



Janet Swier, Sioux Falls' new Teacher of the Year, is finishing her 19th year teaching at Washington High.

Six finalists recognized

Thirty-two teachers were nominated for Teacher of the Year. In addition to Swier, the finalists were Laura Brandt of Washington High, Holly Hofer of Robert Frost Elementary, Andrea Sailor of Oscar Howe Elementary, Heidi Steineke of Hayward Elementary and Rebecca VanDrongelen of McGovern Middle School.



Only 36 percent of grant requests could be funded

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Pomeranke appreciates the opportunity that her Innovation in Education grant will provide her students. Students get tired of listening to her talk while she's standing in the front of the room, she says. Now she will be able to assign small groups of students work together to solve math problems, and then share their work with everyone for classroom discussion.

"My hope is by next fall to have set up quite a bit of it and be using it in my classroom," she says.

The Education Foundation has been awarding such grants since 2005. A committee comprised of Education Foundation Board member Nancy Duncan and four community members reviewed grant requests totaling \$132,306 to pick this year's winners.

"We were only able to fund 36 percent of the Innovation in Education grants requested by teachers. Therefore, we are always looking for individuals and businesses that are passionate about education and willing to help support our cause," says Stephanie Gongopoulos, who chairs the Education Foundation Board.

The Education Foundation has corporate and individual donors. Business donors include: The First National Bank in Sioux Falls; First PREMIER Bank; SDN Communications; Architecture Incorporated; Associated Consulting Engineers Inc.; Avera Health; Dacotah Bank; Dakota Sports; Davenport, Evans, Hurwitz & Smith LLP; Hy-Vee; KELOLAND-TV (Young Broadcasting); Koch Hazard Architects; Sammons Financial; Sanford Health; Schoeneman Brothers; Shopko; Showplace Wood Products; Thornton Flooring; Wells Fargo Bank NA; Woods, Fuller, Shultz & Smith PC; and Xcel Energy.

Other grant winners for 2015-2016

In addition to the four grant winners from Roosevelt High School, other grant winners for the 2015-2016 school year and their school were:

Peggy Baney (Anne Sullivan Elementary); Jolene Gordon and Chris Haak (Cleveland Elementary); Megan Boschee (Eugene Field A+ Elementary); Paula Parrish (Garfield Elementary); Nicole Gardner-Fink (Harvey Dunn Elementary); Julie Larsen (John F. Kennedy Elementary); Shannon Hohwieler (John Harris Elementary); Kimberly Horn (Laura B. Anderson Elementary); Heather Hinnert, Erica Kogel and Cindy Brakke (Pettigrew, Hawthorne and Harvey Dunn elementary); Nancy Boyle, John Haak and Kerri Cox (Robert Frost Elementary); Leonardo Bohorques (Rosa Parks Elementary); Brad Newitt and Christine Carlson (Career & Technical Education Academy); and Brianna Venekamp (Whittier Middle School).

Education news tidbits

The first **Sioux Falls Area Teacher Swap Meet** has been scheduled for 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Aug. 11 at the Sioux Falls Convention Center. The free event is designed to help teachers buy, sell and trade school supplies. The Education Foundation is hosting the event. Avera Health will be the sponsor. Teachers may reserve a table to sell supplies by sending an email request to: TeacherSwapMeet@gmail.com.

The Education Foundation is benefiting again this year from **Hy-Vee's Operation Helpful Smile Program**. Boxes to collect donations for the Education Foundation were placed near checkout stands at seven Hy-Vee stores in Sioux Falls from April 27 to May 3. Hy-Vee and its program sponsors will match up to \$1,000 of the donations received from customers.

The **Lincoln High School class of 1976** has scheduled its 40th reunion for July 22-24. Events include a golf outing, school tours and a picnic at Tuthill Park. A block of rooms have been reserved for reunion participants at the Holiday Inn City Centre. For more information, contact Kristi Oskar-Greene, phone 605-367-7900.

Incumbents **Kent Alberty** and **Carly Reiter** were re-elected to the Sioux Falls School Board in Board in April. In addition to serving on the School Board, Reiter is on the Education Foundation Board. Alberty currently chairs the School Board.

