

## Grant from Education Foundation provides floor pedals so students can burn energy while learning

Nicole Gardner-Fink believes physical movement helps her third-graders learn. So, a set of floor pedals sits under each student's desk.

Some students pedal constantly during classes, and others pedal now and then. Some students even take the pedals with them when they move to a different part of their classroom at Harvey Dunn Elementary.

The pedals are not noisy nor distracting, and students love them, Gardner-Fink says. "I think they help the students to focus, and the constant movement is beneficial to their physical well-being as well."

Gardner-Fink bought 26 sets of floor pedals for her classroom with an Innovation in Education Grant for \$1,280 that she received from the Education Foundation.

The Education Foundation Board awarded 18 grants for a record high total of \$47,815 for the 2015-2016 school year.

Gardner-Fink initially applied for grant funding for eight stationary bikes for use while students studied reading and language arts. However, she changed her request after members of a grant evaluation



**Desks in Nicole Gardner-Fink's third-grade class at Harvey Dunn Elementary are equipped with floor pedals to allow student activity.**

panel suggested that she consider floor pedals instead.

"They asked good questions, like who would maintain the bikes," Gardner-Fink says. They also raised questions about space needs for stationary bikes.

Gardner-Fink researched the pedal option, liked it and was pleased to be able to get enough grant funding to buy pedal sets to supply every student in her classroom. The classroom décor also includes tropical umbrellas, which give the room a relaxed, summertime feel.

Physical activity helps children's brains work more productively, she says.

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# Floor pedals help third-graders stay active in their classroom

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Gardner-Fink hopes that the physical activity she encourages helps the students think better and focus longer to learn more about subjects such as mathematics and reading.

Dr. Teresa Boysen, principal at Harvey Dunn, says the floor pedals have been a great motivator for students.

Some faculty members have said they would like pedals or stability balls at their desk to help them maintain focus on long days, Boysen says.

Gardner-Fink and Boysen appreciate the Education Foundation's ongoing efforts to provide grants to teachers for innovative classroom practices.

"The Education Foundation has benefited hundreds and probably thousands of students over the years with projects that are research-based," Boysen says.

Gardner-Fink has a history of thinking creatively to help students release energy and learn at the same time.

She previously replaced most of the chairs in her classroom room with



**Nicole Gardner-Fink earned a grant to equip student desks with pedals.**

exercise balls, called stability balls.

Sitting on the balls allows the students to move slightly and strengthen core muscles that help them stay balanced, she says.

The elastic balls can be adjusted in size to accommodate height differences in students, and four, leg-like prongs on the bottom help so that the balls don't roll away.

"I've noticed that kids have a harder time sitting still than they used to," says Gardner-Fink, who is in her 22<sup>nd</sup> year of teaching and her 17<sup>th</sup> with the Sioux Falls District. "We don't have as much recess time as we used to, and the kids need to move."

## Donations welcome and needed

The Education Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization endorsed by the Sioux Falls School District. The organization operates on donations. Tax-deductible gifts from businesses and individuals are welcome.

More information about the organization is available on our website, [www.sfeducationfoundation.org](http://www.sfeducationfoundation.org). Questions about Education Foundation programs may be sent to [SFEducationFoundation@gmail.com](mailto:SFEducationFoundation@gmail.com).

Questions about donation options may be directed to the Sioux Falls Area Community Foundation, phone [\(605\) 336-7055](tel:605-336-7055).

## Moe's restaurant providing support

Moe's Southwest Grill in Sioux Falls will support the Education Foundation with two more discount events for customers.

Moe's held special events Oct. 12 and Oct. 18 in which customers who presented a copy of an ad flyer were given a 25 percent discount. The savings will be given to the Foundation.

Additional discount events have been scheduled for 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Nov. 15 and Dec. 13. (See attached flyers.)

A few hundred dollars was raised in the first two events, and more is expected to be raised, says Justin Krivanak, a field marketing manager for the Moe's chain.

The Sioux Falls location is at 3406 S. Western Ave. Moe's specializes in Southwest fare, such as burritos.

## 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.



# Baney has passion for teaching reading

Peggy Baney's personal mission is to break the cycle of illiteracy that lingers in some families.

Baney is a teacher in the Literacy in Action program at Garfield Elementary School. She specializes in helping students with delayed reading skills.

"I want to make a difference in at least one child's life – hopefully more than that, but in at least one child's life," she says.

If she can help a student overcome learning obstacles and start to enjoy reading, the experience can spread and get an entire family on a positive track, she says.



**Peggy Baney feels at home in the library at Garfield Elementary.**

Some children lack outside encouragement to perform well or to even finish school. "We have to change the mind-sets of (those) students so they know they can make something of their lives," she says.

Baney is in her first year at Garfield but in her 36<sup>th</sup> year overall working for the Sioux Falls School District. In addition to being a teacher, she serves as a volunteer on the Education Foundation Board. She joined the Board in the spring of 2015.

Fellow Board members appreciate her experience in education.

"Peggy has played an invaluable role on our Board by providing us with an educator's perspective when we are developing new programs and events," Board Chair Stephanie Gongopoulos says. "I am always interested to hear her thoughts because she truly understands the opportunities and challenges faced by educators today."

Garfield Principal Kristin Skogstad has known Baney for several years. They worked together at Anne Sullivan Elementary. Now the two women are working together again at Garfield.

"Everything that Peggy does, she has the best interest of students in her mind and in her heart," Skogstad says. "She's always looking for ways to provide support, not only in reading -- much of her passion comes from reading -- but for the overall climate of the school. She wants what's best for all students."

The opportunity to serve on the Education Foundation Board has helped Baney become more aware of the big-picture challenges facing education proponents, including the Education Foundation.

"It's very eye-opening and sometimes frustrating because I realize how much the public doesn't know about education and needs not met by federal and state dollars," she says.

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# School District pursuing strategic plan

The Sioux Falls School District is in the final stages of putting together a four-pronged strategic plan, Superintendent Brian Maher says.

Maher was the featured speaker at the Education Foundation’s second annual Innovation in Education Breakfast, which was held Aug. 18 at The Country Club of Sioux Falls.

Maher outlined four specific areas the plan eventually will address. They are:

- Student outcomes. The district will focus on improving student achievement in reading and mathematics.
- Educational culture and climate. The district has an 82 percent graduation rate. That’s not bad for a district of Sioux Falls’ size and complexity, but it’s still unacceptably high, he says.
- Staffing. Sioux Falls has the opportunity to hire and retain the best and brightest teachers, he says. A recent increase in the state sales tax designated for boosting teachers’ pay will help, he says.
- Community engagement. “Listening will be a priority,” he says.

Maher also pointed out that the district has building space



**Superintendent Brian Maher updates the audience during the annual Innovation in Education Breakfast.**

for 6,900 high school students in existing facilities, but has nearly 8,000 students in kindergarten through third grade.

“We need to figure out where we put those 1,100 (additional) students in a fairly short period of time,” Maher says. Building another high school building isn’t the only possible solution, he says.

## Reading teacher

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The positive side of serving on the Education Foundation Board is the opportunity to help get grants for innovative educational practices into the hands of deserving teachers, she says.

Baney’s office at Garfield is filled with books for children.

“I have a passion for getting books into the hands of children and their families,” she says. “I want kids to be able to function in life. In order to do that, they need to know how to read.”

Away from work, Baney enjoys music. She plays the piano and organ.

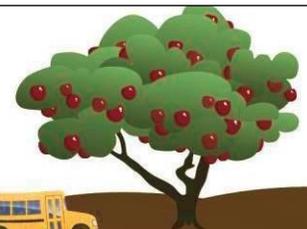
Her husband, Bhrett, also works in education. He is the director of development and a preschool teacher assistant at Sioux Falls Lutheran School. They have two grown-up children.

## Board members

The Sioux Falls Public Schools Education Foundation is governed by Board of volunteers. Members are:

Peggy Baney, Nancy Duncan, Vernon Brown (vice chair), Catherine Dekkenga (secretary), Jackie Dumansky, Stephanie Gongopoulos (chair), Nancy Hagen, John Hedrick, Teresa Jackson, DeeAnn Konrad, Deb Koski, Kiki Nelsen, Justin Reilly (treasurer) and Carly Reiter.

The Board is assisted by two part-time employees: Foundation Coordinator Angie Kuiper and Newsletter Editor Rob Swenson.



# Teacher Swap Meet was big success, organizer says



Pictured above, from left: DeeAnn Konrad, Anne Powers, Lindy Bell and Amy Scott-Stoltz were among the volunteers who worked at the event.

Middle: Teachers Becky Moser (left) and Kim Horn chatted while doing business.

Lower left: Rochell Pederson, a kindergarten teacher at Eugene Field Elementary, was one of the sellers.

Lower right: Ellen Schwenk of Brookings and her granddaughter, Sydney Stoel, were among the shoppers.



About 500 shoppers attended the first Sioux Falls Area Teacher Swap Meet. The event was hosted by the Education Foundation and sponsored by Avera Health.

The swap meet was designed to help teachers in the Sioux Falls area sell unneeded school supplies. The event was a big success, says Amy Scott-Stoltz, who proposed and coordinated the swap meet for the Education Foundation. She is the past chair of the group.

“Teachers were leaving with shopping bags full of useful classroom items at bargain prices,” Scott-Stoltz says.

“Most of the sellers said it wasn’t so much they wanted to make a ton of money, but they wanted their items to be used. But getting a little money was nice, too.”

Organizers hope to make the swap meet an annual event.

