

## Grant from Education Foundation helps get drone program at Roosevelt off the ground

Nathan Hofflander, a computer science teacher at Roosevelt High School, has high expectations for drone technology.

“This technology is not going away. It’s just getting better. The industry is booming,” he says. “Drones are the next big thing.”

Hofflander is doing his part to increase students’ understanding and interest in the remotely controlled, flying gadgets. His classroom is stocked with 14 drones of various sizes and quality.

Integrating drone technology into classroom education and school activities is part of a program that Hofflander calls The Volare Project. Volare means “to fly” in Latin.

An Innovation in Education Grant from the Education Foundation has helped Hofflander advance The Volare Project. A \$5,145 grant from the organization helped him buy six hand-sized drones and two bigger, higher-end models. The grant also help him launch a website to promote and advance the use of drones in education.

The grant for the drone project was among 21 Innovation in Education grants that the Education



**Nathan Hofflander incorporates drone technology into computer science classes at Roosevelt High School. He is holding two drones.**

Foundation awarded to teachers for 2017. The grants totaled \$40,000.

Funding for the grants came from business and individual donations. The grant program administered by the Education Foundation is designed to raise money for creative educational materials, programs and projects not funded by tax dollars.

Hofflander’s project was among the grant projects highlighted at the fourth annual Innovation in Education Breakfast. The annual event was held Aug 17 at The Country Club of Sioux Falls.

“Any classroom should be able to use drones. It doesn’t have to be computer science,” Hofflander says.

In addition to educational purposes such as collecting data, drones can be used for purposes such as covering and promoting school activities, he says. Flying drones can be an activity, too. Roosevelt has a flying club, and it hosted its first drone race last spring.

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# Grant for drone project ‘was a dream come true’

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The club plans to host annual drone races.

Nancy Duncan, coordinator of the Education Foundation’s Grant Review Committee, said Hofflander’s award was one of the largest that the organization gave out last school year.

“It’s a pretty interesting project. I think it will be fun to see where he goes with it,” Duncan says.

Hofflander appreciates the opportunities that the Education Foundation has helped create for students and for Roosevelt with the grant.

“It was a dream come true. This was my first time pursuing a grant this size and following through with it,” he says.

Hofflander also has acquired funding help for his drone project from DonorsChoose.org, a website that enables people to donate to educational projects that they like. The website helped him raise \$1,471.

He has access to nine, hand-sized drones; three mid-quality models that are about two feet by two feet; and two high-end models that about one foot by one foot in size. Some of the drones can be flown indoors.

No license is required to fly small drones inside a building. However, federal regulations and certification requirements take effect outdoors.

The flying devices are equipped with video cameras of varying quality and capability, as well as other features.

The coming school year will be Hofflander’s ninth year in teaching and his second at Roosevelt. He has incorporated drone use into two classes. He initially got interested in the technology 2016 when his wife bought him a small drone as a gift.

His interest in drone has expanded into a side business. He and business partner Frank Regas have started a company called Ascending Innovations, which provides clients with services such as aerial imaging and data collection.

Rules for flying unmanned aerial vehicles vary, depending on whether a person is flying recreationally or for commerce.



**These hand-sized drones are among those available for educational purposes at Roosevelt High School.**

Remote pilots must be certified or operate under the supervision of someone who is certified, such as Hofflander.

## 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.

## Our members

Board members serve as volunteers. Stephanie Gongopoulos chairs the Board of Directors. Other members are: Reece Almond, Peggy Baney, Callie Beisch, Vernon Brown (vice chair), Catherine Dekkenga (secretary), Jackie Dumansky (treasurer), Nancy Duncan, Nancy Hagen, DeeAnn Konrad, Deb Koski, Kiki Nelsen and Cynthia Mickelson.

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

For more information about the Foundation and its programs, see [www.sfeducationfoundation.org](http://www.sfeducationfoundation.org).



# Facilities among school challenges, Maher says

Guessing the identities of the five largest schools in South Dakota is relatively easy: Roosevelt, Washington and Lincoln in Sioux Falls, and Central and Stevens in Rapid City.

Identifying the sixth-largest school is more difficult. Aberdeen Central, perhaps? No, it's Memorial Middle School in Sioux Falls, which has more than 1,300 students in just three grades.

Superintendent Brian Maher popped that little quiz on about 120 education, civic and business leaders during the Education Foundation's annual Innovation in Education Breakfast on Aug. 27 at The Country Club of Sioux Falls.

Dr. Maher was one of the featured speakers at the news-packed and entertaining event. He used the school-size question to illustrate the increasing facility challenges facing South Dakota's largest school district.

As of last school year, there were about 1,100 more students in grades k-3 than in grades 9-12. If enrollment and space-use trends hold steady in Sioux Falls Public Schools, the district won't have enough seats when the youngest students advance to high school.

Addressing facility issues is just part of a strategic plan that is beginning to be updated by the district. Other key issues include graduation rates, student attendance, student behaviors, staff demographics, student achievement and school engagement in the community.

Increasing the diversity of the school staff is among the

growing challenges in the district.

Maher noted that 26 years ago, enrollment in Sioux Falls Public Schools was 94 percent white and 6 percent non-white. Today, it's about 65 percent white and 35 percent non-white. Meanwhile, staff diversity remains unchanged at about 98 percent white.

The district should strive to make its faculty better reflect the racial makeup of the student body, he said. "It's our new reality as a city. It's our new reality as a school district," he said.

It's also critical that the district strive to have students reading well by third grade, he said. A study by the Annie E. Casey Foundation found that students who cannot read proficiently by the third grade are four times less likely to graduate from high school on time. Students who also live in poverty are 13 times less likely to graduate on time.

Maher outlined a year-long timeline of steps for the district to consider issues and propose solutions. A bond issue likely will be required to address facilities issues, he said. The last one in the district was in 1997.

The breakfast also highlighted the Education Foundation's work to help teachers and stimulate creativity in classrooms.

Stephanie Gongopoulos, who chairs the Education Foundation Board, reported that the organization funded 21 Innovation in Education Grants in 2017. The grants totaled \$40,000. The organization also funded 60 \$100 grants to help first-time teachers buy classroom supplies.

Flying drones and a robot named Fred are among the unique teaching tools that teachers have purchased with help from the Education Foundation. Drones and the robot were demonstrated at the breakfast.

Jay Huizenga, general manager of KELOLAND-TV, said the best thing about contributing money to the Education Foundation is seeing where the money goes.

"If you're not giving to the Education Foundation at this time, I really encourage you to do so. If you are, I encourage you to increase that," he said.



Superintendent Maher speaks at breakfast.



## DAR Foundation contributes \$15,000 to help teachers buy supplies, stir innovation

Education Foundation programs received a significant boost recently from the Sioux Falls chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. The Mary Chilton DAR Foundation, which is affiliated with the Sioux Falls Mary Chilton DAR Chapter, granted the Education Foundation \$15,000 for its two primary programs.



Officials with the Sioux Falls chapter of DAR include (clockwise from upper left): Bert Olson, president of Foundation Board; Kim Euker, chapter regent; Judy Goetz, chairman of Grants Committee, and Diane Josephson, past regent.

The Education Foundation's programs fit nicely with DAR's interest in promoting education, said Judy Goetz, who chairs the DAR Foundation Grants Committee.

The Education Foundation Board members welcome the financial help from DAR.

"It is a perfect partnership since both of our organizations have education as a key focus," said Stephanie Gongopoulos, who chairs the Education Foundation Board.

The Education Foundation will use the money to increase its Beyond Book grants, which help first-time teachers buy supplies for their classrooms. The grant amount will be increased for the 2017-2018 school year from a current level of \$100 per teacher to \$200.

The rest of the money from DAR will be used for the educational organization's Innovation in Education grant program. Innovation in Education grants are designed to help fund creative educational projects that are not covered by tax dollars.

DAR awards approximately \$100,000 in grants per year, primarily in southeastern South Dakota. In addition to education, historical preservation and patriotism are causes valued by DAR.

"We want an educated citizenry. This is a way to move in that direction," said Diane Josephson, past regent of the local DAR chapter.



## Hy-Vee program raises \$1,181

Sioux Falls Hy-Vee stores' annual Helpful Smile program recently raised \$1,181.37 for the Education Foundation.

Operation Helpful Smile donates funds to a different local nonprofit organization each week. Customers can contribute to each week's fundraiser at the checkout line.

Stephanie Gongopoulos, chair of the Education Foundation Board, recently accepted the contribution from four Hy-Vee store directors.

Pictured above, from left to right, are Mark Lammers, Andy Sutton, Gongopoulos, Kristi Masterson and Collin Venenga.

## Mickelson is new School Board rep

Cynthia Mickelson won a four-way race for the Sioux Falls School Board in June. She also is becoming the School Board's new liaison to the Education Foundation.

Mickelson is taking Carly Reiter's place as the School Board representative on the Education Foundation Board. Reiter remains on the School Board.

Mickelson is a grant writer and mother. She is married to Mark Mickelson, a Sioux Falls businessman and state legislator.





Jamie Brooks, a first-year teacher at Cleveland Elementary, attended the Swap Meet with her mother, Teri Lippert.



Jenn Atkinson, a counselor at Axtell Park Middle School, worked at the event as a vendor for Usborne Books & More.



Tony Martinet worked at the Sioux Falls Education Association's give-away table.

## 2017 Teacher Swap Meet was 'fantastic' event, organizer says

The second annual Education Foundation Teacher Swap Meet "went great," event organizer Amy Scott-Stoltz says.

The 2017 Swap Meet was held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. June 15 at the Sioux Falls Convention Center.

The annual Swap Meet is designed to help area teachers buy, sell and trade educational supplies. Members of the public also were welcome to come and shop.

The Education Foundation hosted the event, and Avera sponsored it. Fourteen vendors also participated.

"The Swap Meet this year was fantastic," Scott-Stoltz says. Approximately 300 people attended this year.

The 2018 Swap Meet is expected to be held in late July, Scott-Stoltz says.



Orange City, Iowa teacher Marissa Maassen and her son, Seth, took a seat on the floor to review some of the supplies available at the meet.



Volunteers at this year's Swap Meet included Jackie Dumansky, Peggy Baney and Amy Scott-Stoltz.



Helping staff the Avera - Hy-Vee Healthy You Mobile were Hy-Vee registered dietitians Kristin Sousek and Jessica Becker, and SDSU pharmacy student Emma Peschong.

