

# Auburn Education Foundation In The News - 2004

## Auburn Education Foundation lends a helping hand

Group offers mini-grants to assist teachers with funds for extra classroom projects

By Sandy Firth  
Journal Staff Writer

When Skyridge second-grade teacher Laurie Westsmith wanted to expand her spring time science units on ants and butterflies, she applied for and received a \$250 grant from the Auburn Education Foundation.

The Auburn Education Foundation provides mini-grants to teachers in the district to supplement what administrators are unable to pay for.

"The district is not a well-off district and is limited in what they can pay for," said Ed Gilligan, foundation president and former superintendent of the district. "We are helping the teachers do those extra projects."

Last school year, the foundation gave 32 teachers and teacher aides grants averaging \$250.

The foundation was started 17 years ago when the former principal at Alta Vista School, Steve Brown, saw a need for extra money for teachers, Gilligan said.

Westsmith has received several grants from the foundation. The most recent one last school year was for science materials

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Laurie Westsmith, a second-grade teacher at Skyridge, helps Sydney Morgan, 2, and her brother Preston Morgan, 4, select a book during the Auburn Education Foundation's rummage sale Saturday. The foundation provides mini-grants to Auburn Union teachers for projects in their classrooms.

## Grants: A committee decides which projects will be funded

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for her classroom.

"I do science units on butterflies and ants," she said. "The foundation gave me a butterfly pavilion to hang from my ceiling so that the students can see the butterflies better. They are enclosed around the ceiling and the children can look up and see them. I also got a new style of ant hill that has the side cut out to see all the structures the ants make in their little city."

Westsmith said her students get more excited with a hands-on experience with science.

"I've been in this district for 12 years and worked in three others before," she said. "This is the first place I've been that has had something like the foundation."

When she first found out about the foundation, Westsmith said she didn't think much of it because she didn't know what it was.

"Once I found out what it is they do, I got more involved," she said. "Now I am very active with them. I figure that if they are going to give me money, then I need to give something back."

Despite being started in 1985, Vince Anaclerio, district superintendent, said it remained dormant for a couple of years.

"When the former president moved out of the area, there was no parent or community member willing to step up to run the foundation," he said. "It isn't really the job of the staff or myself to run an organization that is independent of the district."

To raise money for the mini-

grants, the foundation holds fund-raisers throughout the year.

"We do rummage sales, parent night out at certain restaurants that give us a portion of their profit for that evening and a spaghetti dinner in the spring," Gilligan said. "The spaghetti dinner is one of our biggest events of the year."

Gilligan and vice president Audrey Mueller also go out to business owners to ask them to donate to the foundation.

Anaclerio said he believes because Gilligan and Mueller go into the community, they received a \$2,500 grant donation from Wells Fargo Bank.

"For the first time, they will be able to give a couple of teachers larger grants than normal," he said. "Ed and Audrey are working very hard to expand the

foundation and what it does."

To receive a mini-grant teachers must fill out a grant application and then a four-person committee decides who receives the money each year.

For more information on the Auburn Education Foundation, call Gilligan at 521-1111.

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