



For Immediate Release

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## **Hastings Education Foundation Distributes Grants for 2020-2021 School Year**

**Hastings-on-Hudson, NY** – At the end of each school year, the Hastings-on-Hudson UFSD and its teachers and administrators are the fortunate recipients of grants funded by the Hastings Education Foundation. This year, despite not being able to hold its annual major fundraising event due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Foundation was still able to distribute \$63,403.67.

Since its inception in 1997, the Foundation has awarded nearly \$1.3 million of grants to the Hastings-on-Hudson School District. HEF's mission is to enhance the educational experience of all Hastings students by funding new and innovative programs not traditionally included in the annual school budget. Applications for these grants come from faculty, staff, and even students! Over the years, HEF has approved grants for projects related to the arts, culture, science, fitness, technology, media, staff development and more.

"We urge the Hastings community to approach teachers and administrators with exciting ideas for possible grants. We are always so grateful to be able to serve as a catalyst for programs that are enriching, challenging, meaningful and sustainable. As we approach the coming year, we are especially interested in funding more initiatives that explore issues of race, diversity and social justice," said HEF 2019-2020 Co-Presidents Barron Lerner and Hillari Freireich.

Superintendent Dr. Valerie Henning-Piedmonte discussed how important the support of HEF is to the school district by saying, "The Hastings Education Foundation has long supported the children and educators of our school district by awarding grants used to foster creativity and innovation. A grant from the Foundation helps to launch new ideas or projects that can live on years after the grant was awarded. I want to personally thank HEF for their generosity."

Recipients also echoed their appreciation. Gerard Marciano/Production Coordinator of the Theater Department said, "We are overwhelmed by the Foundation's generosity, belief, and support of our theater program. At times, our sound system has fallen short of our student's extraordinary efforts on stage. This final upgrade to the high school auditorium, the centerpiece of our school district, will serve our students and the entire district for many years with state-of-the-art sound for all events in the auditorium. We are humbled and very grateful and can't wait to get back to the stage. See you at the show!"

On behalf of the Race Matters Committee, Ross Abrams and Jenice Mateo-Toledo stated, "The Race Matters Committee is thrilled that the Hastings Education Foundation has funded our Racial Literacy Speaker Series for a second year. The generous grant will allow us to bring meaningful, thought-provoking guests into our classrooms and school buildings, to broaden and deepen our students' understanding of their world."

HHS Science Teacher Faye Barenfeld remarked, "The HEF Grant Program generously provided the funds for me to create a Culinary Chemistry classroom kitchen, thus supporting the growth of our students' applied scientific inquiry skills for years to come. Thanks to this grant, students will develop culinary skills while exploring the connections between chemistry and the food they prepare. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to bring this elective course to Hastings students and to ensure it becomes a fixture of the science department course offerings."

Following are the grants funded for the 2020-2021 school year.

- 1) Hastings High School Auditorium Sound Upgrade (Marciano, Szymanski), \$23,599.43

This grant, requested by the Theater Department, provides funding for a new sound system for all events in the HHS Auditorium, which is used by students in 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades.

- 2) Diverse Voices, Diverse Paths – Speaker Series (Abrams, Mateo-Toledo, Kipper), \$11,000

This grant, requested by the Race Matters Committee, provides funding for five speakers throughout the year, for students in K-12<sup>th</sup> grades. This series allows students to learn from leaders in different industries who represent a diversity of skills, backgrounds, genders and ethnicities.

- 3) Chromebooks for Hillside's Library Media Center (Nedwick), \$6,500

This grant provides funding for 25 Chromebooks for students in K-4<sup>th</sup> grades to use in the library and media center. This will allow for a full class to use the Chromebooks during their library time and gives the younger students access to Chromebooks.

- 4) Large Format Printer for Science Department (Shandroff), \$6,000

This grant provides funding for a large format printer to be used by the high school to make posters, primarily for science research competitions. It will also be available for other departments.

- 5) Introduction to Sewing (Spiniello), \$5,113

This grant provides funding for sewing machines and initial projects for the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade home and careers class. The teacher plans to make it part of the curriculum, as it has been a big success at the high school.

- 6) Dr. Bill Daggett, Opening Day 2020 Speaker (Henning-Piedmonte), \$5,000

This grant, requested by the Superintendent, provides funding for Dr. Bill Daggett who will be the opening day speaker for the Superintendent's Conference Day in August. Dr. Daggett focuses on how

high performing schools like Hastings can innovate and create learning environments that encourage all students to use their strengths and think critically and creatively.

7) Culinary Chemistry Course (Barenfeld), \$3,232.40

This grant provides funding for kitchen and laboratory supplies needed to conduct experiments to start the new science elective, Culinary Chemistry, which will be available to all students in the high school. It's innovative and creative, and explores chemistry concepts in an applied, engaging and practical manner.

8) Virtual Theater (Wineberg/Theater Department), \$1,941

This grant, requested by the Theater Department, provides funding for equipment and software that would allow for virtual streaming of events, particularly in anticipation of next year.

9) Hastings Sustainability Investigation (Shapiro), \$1,017.84

This grant provides funding for books for a cross-curricular sustainability project for all 7<sup>th</sup> graders. These carefully selected books will help the students learn good research skills, and the material is age-appropriate and valid, versus what students often find on the Internet.

Additional sentiments by grant recipients were:

"On behalf of the seventh grade team, a huge thank you to the Hastings Education Foundation for the approval of my grant and for its unwavering support of our students. The funds will be used to update our environmental sustainability research library. This will provide more opportunity to hone students' research skills as we continue to promote environmental awareness and citizenship." Scott Shapiro, 7th Grade Language Arts/ Team Coordinator.

"This grant will provide an opportunity for students to explore the world of fashion and clothing within our Home and Career Skills curriculum. Students will learn how to use sewing machines and apply this life skill to future interests they may have. Thank you for this wonderful grant! Romeo Spiniello, Home and Career Skills.

And, Melissa Shandroff, Science Teacher and Department Chair stated, "On behalf of the science department, we are deeply grateful to the Hastings Education Foundation for supporting our grant for a new large format printer. Without a large format printer, the science research students would have a difficult time competing against other districts at the local, statewide, and national competitions. All students gain valuable skills when creating posters including design, organization, and conveying a message. For students who learn visually, making a poster can highlight those skills. Also, most posters require a presentation in front of peers in class, which allows students to strengthen their confidence in presenting. Thank you to HEF for supporting our students with this grant!"

To learn more about the Hastings Education Foundation, or to make a donation, please visit <http://www.hastingseducationfoundation.org>.