

Alton Educational Foundation Learns About Projects at Alton School District

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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ALTON - Members of the Alton Educational Foundation (AEF) gathered at Alton Middle School on Feb. 7, 2024, to learn about the projects they fund, including a sewing club, a LEGO STEM lab and more.

AEF invites community members to donate to the Alton Community Unit School District #11 (ACUSD11) through the [Guardians of Education](#) program. The organization then provides grants for ACUSD11 teachers to fund classroom resources and extracurricular projects. On Feb. 7, teachers were present to share information about their projects and how they used the grant money to bring new resources to their students.

“I can’t think of another word other than awesome,” said Cathy Droste, AEF chairperson. “We have so many donors who have donated to our organization in order for us to put out grants for teachers, and this is a chance for donors to see where their monies are going and to be hands-on, not just see or read about it, but actually meet the people that applied for the grants and were able to use the grant monies to put them into use. It’s just my favorite thing of the year.”

Teachers were present to share a variety of projects. Angel Weber talked about the middle school’s sewing club, which teaches students how to sew and make pillows and clothing for terminally ill patients. Pat Goetten talked through his shop class’s outdoor classroom project. Lexa Browning explained how her classes created two children’s books, which have been published and sold around the Riverbend.

Kate Page, a teacher at Eunice Smith Elementary, created a Sound Wall in her classroom to help kids distinguish between sounds as they learn to read. She discovered the idea while researching different strategies to teach kids how to read, and she immediately wanted to implement it but knew the Sound Wall curriculum was slightly out of her budget. She was pleased to receive the grant from AEF that allowed her to create the Sound Wall.

“I was like, ‘Hey, AEF, I would really like this. It’s a little bit out of my budget. My husband might get really mad if I spend this much money,’” she joked. “It’s something I’m very appreciative for because it’s a little bit beyond my reach personally. It’s great that AEF does this. When you see a need, you fill it. That’s what you do as a teacher. It’s helpful when you have everybody so willing to help out.”

Droste echoed this and noted that she hopes more people will consider joining AEF or donating through the Guardians of Education program. You can learn more about the Alton Educational Foundation at their [official website at AltonEd.org](#).

“It’s just joyful,” Droste added. “It makes me feel good. It makes, hopefully, our donors feel good about the cause they’re supporting and what they’re doing for the kids in the district here. So it makes me feel really good that we are able to contribute and give back to the community and the school district and help support teaching.”