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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**HEF Contributes Preventive and Proactive Strategies in Addition to Grant Awards**

In addition to five grant awards this spring - ranging in scope from an urban orchard to 'smart pens' to a portable kitchen - and three *Awesome Fund* grants to student clubs, the Hopkins Education Foundation is deeply investing in a host of meaningful endeavors to directly benefit the entire student body of Hopkins Public Schools for the foreseeable future. *Student Wellness=Student Success* has been the major theme of the foundation's past two Royal Bash annual fundraisers. Clearly this topic has struck a chord with the community, generating an outpouring of \$202,500 specifically directed towards health and wellness initiatives. Among those now up and running are afterschool Wellness Centers at HHS and both North and West Junior High Schools, which offer counseling services from school staff and MoveFwd. The Centers are expanding and growing in scope in response to student feedback; they will be open during the school day for the 2019/20 academic year and will offer a variety of wellness programs such as yoga and dance.

HEF funded the development and launch of Royals United, a growing student-led group focused on breaking the stigma of mental illness. The group hosted a week-long "Love Yourself" event to promote self-care among their fellow students. Now under development is a program to train students in the supportive role of *Peer Helpers*, for which they will receive a class credit.

HEF is funding a variety of teacher training and assessment tools, as well as the Second Step Curriculum, a proven behavior-management strategy for the elementary schools, and *Mindful Kids*, which will be run by Relate Counseling as a preventive behavior strategy. HEF has contributed significant funds to self-regulation rooms and/or strategies at every school.

And a new HEF-funded position has been created in Hopkins: Outdoor Learning Specialist Bonnie Lohman is coordinating the curriculum associated with all of the elementary school gardens, including HEF-donated Tower Gardens. To learn more, visit HEF's website: <http://hopkinseducationfoundation.org/student-wellness-student-success-2018-special-appeal/>

Below are details of the five grants awarded this spring; attached are photos of each. Or please visit HEF's website here for this same information: <http://hopkinseducationfoundation.org/spring-grants-2019/>

**Urban Orchard - \$2,600 - Meadowbrook 6<sup>th</sup> Grade – Melissa Elsen, Jessica Heisel, Steve Miller**

Plums, Cherries, Golden Raspberries and Pears are the future bounty from Meadowbrook's new urban orchard, located in a large interior courtyard. Trees and bushes planted this spring will provide curriculum and leadership opportunity for many, many years to come. As the fruit feeds critters, birds and eventually students, and the plants offer shelter, the orchard itself will fire students' imagination and curiosity as it builds community. Sixth graders will be the 'keepers', working up to this leadership role throughout their time at Meadowbrook. Each grade will have a part to play in this project, learning to care for the earth as they investigate the magic of botany.

**Family Connection Nights – \$540 - Harley Hopkins Early Childhood Special Education – Jackie Hunke, Lyndsay Hetzel, Joanne Search Johnson**

Busy parents often discover their social lives develop around their children; but what if your young child has special needs and must attend specific small classes or receives at-home intervention? Your social circle becomes noticeably smaller and isolating and you do not get to enjoy the benefits of camaraderie. Family Connection Nights, hosted by Harley Hopkins Family Center, aim to connect these parents and caregivers in meaningful ways - in a comfortable environment of support and connection with those who can truly understand and share their daily worries and triumphs. HEF's grant provides translators to these evening events, in order to eliminate further barriers to these positive connections of support among these special families.

**Smart-Pens Promote Independence - \$2,276 – Hopkins High School, North and West Junior Highs Special Education – Rande Peyton, Terri Osland, Adrienna Korsman, Victoria Wilson**

This pilot project has the very specific goal of breaking down barriers that keep students from meeting their full potential. *Echo* Smart-Pens offer students on the Autism spectrum the ability to keep up with the rigor they are capable of – while remaining in the general education classroom. Staff will identify those students who struggle with executive functioning, focus, language impairments or intellectual processing, and train them on the use of these devices. The Smart-Pens record everything the student hears in class, as well as the notes they take, so no information is missed. The student can later listen again to the class discussions and lectures or convert them to a digital format. This boost will promote independence and allow students to remain with their peers for more (or all) of the day.

## **Everyone Making Music Together - \$4,914 - Meadowbrook K-2 – Carah Hart, Marie Scholz, Andy Jensen**

Xylophones, metallophones, and glockenspiels – these instruments are perfectly tailored to engage budding musicians, specifically in grades K-2, and are completely adjustable for each student. These *Orff* instruments are already being successfully implemented; this grant literally doubles Meadowbrook’s inventory to allow every student in class to play at once rather than in shifts. Students receive maximum hands-on instruction in rhythm, which has a well-documented correlation with mathematics, and each entire class can now play together in one magnificent band.

## **Edible Education: Kitchen a la Cart - \$10, 815 – Hopkins Community Education (Preschool – Adult) – Andrea Sjogren, Lisa Walker, Jennifer Kopischke**

Ingenuity can be portable. Hopkins Community Education knows there’s much to be learned by preparing and cooking food, aside from the use of a measuring cup, as evidenced by the overwhelming popularity of the current offering of cooking classes (Math Munchies, Chinese Cooking and Garden to Table, to name just a few). This portable kitchen will expand the opportunities for fun, experiential learning, including what constitutes healthy food and good nutrition, math and organization skills, as well as following directions (and the sometimes-foul consequences of NOT following them). Kitchen a la Cart will be housed at Eisenhower Community Center and can be pushed right into the classroom. It will be used daily at Camp Royal (summer), in the afterschool SMARTS program, and in Adult Basic Education classes. Future ideas for using the cart include Eisenhower/XinXing school family nights and indoor recess, and Family and Consumer Science classes. The possibilities are deliciously endless.

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### **About the Hopkins Education Foundation**

Hopkins Education Foundation (HEF) has awarded more than \$2.7 Million, through 440+ grants, to enhance education in the Hopkins Public Schools. The non-profit Foundation, independent from Hopkins Public Schools, is dedicated to providing resources to engage, innovate and energize students, staff and curriculum. It is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors.

The Foundation is supported entirely through community contributions, including:

- parents and other community members
- corporate contributions
- fundraising events and projects
- gifts of stock, cash and securities
- a beneficiary of wills and estates

Each year, grant applications from teachers, staff - and even student clubs - are rigorously reviewed by HEF’s Board. Funds are allocated to individual schools, to pilot projects, and to broad initiatives incorporated across all schools.

### **About Hopkins Public Schools**

Hopkins Public Schools is an award-winning school district with a K-12 population of about 6,800 students, serving the city of Hopkins, most of Minnetonka, about half of Golden Valley, and portions of

Eden Prairie, Edina, Plymouth, and St. Louis Park. It has six elementary schools, one magnet Chinese immersion school (XinXing Academy), two junior highs and one high school.