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Contact:
Liz Fazio, PR Chair  Sarah W. Williams, ABC Grants Chair
prchair@jlaustin.org  swidoff@hotmail.com
(303) 888-7353  (512) 784-6205

The Junior League of Austin Celebrates Another Year of Area Aid For Better Classrooms (ABC) Grants for Innovative Teaching Programs

(May 2012, Austin, TX) The Junior League of Austin and its partners, 3M and AMD, are pleased to announce the 2012-2013 Aid for Better Classrooms (ABC) grants of the ABC Grants Program. In April 2012, the program awarded its 2012-2013 grants totaling over $11,000 to 14 recipients for the upcoming academic year. All of these projects are innovative, have real world application, enhance current school curriculum, and have a direct impact on students across all age groups and grades from Pre-K to high school. Many of the supplies and teaching tools purchased with funds from ABC Grants will continue to benefit the classrooms for years to come.

The 14 winning projects will have the most significant impact in the areas of reading and science with other curriculum areas including engineering, gardening, photography, interscholastic activity, music, and technology. Winning teachers represent the school districts of Austin, Del Valle, Leander, Pflugerville, and Round Rock.

“We were thrilled with the diversity of projects that we are able to fund this year. These projects will not only touch a large number of students in the coming school year but in many years to come. I am proud of the Junior League, 3M, and AMD for supporting this program and continuing to invest in the future of our teachers, children and local schools”, noted ABC Grants Chair Sarah Williams.

The ABC Grants Program’s purpose is to encourage and support excellence in teaching by awarding individual teaching grants up to $1,000 annually. The reach of the program has expanded over the years so that today, the program accepts applications from any classroom teacher in a Travis or Williamson County school district that has a student population of at least 5,000. With these 2012-2013 grants, the ABC Grants program has cumulatively awarded over $200,000 in grant funds as an investment in education in the Austin community.
The application for the 2012-2013 ABC Grants Program will be available on the JLA website at
www.jlaustin.org starting December 1, 2012. Information about the application time frame and
deadlines will be posted as it becomes available.

For more information on the ABC Grants Program, visit The Junior League of Austin website at
www.jlaustin.org under the ABC Grants Program area.

The 2012-2013 ABC grant recipients and their projects are as follows:

2012-2013 Aid for Better Classrooms Grant Winners

Debra Hurst
Widen Elementary School, Reading Coach
Austin ISD
Grant Amount: $885.00
Kimberly Royal, Principal
*Our Butterfly “Kinder” Garden*

Utilizing an underused area in an outdoor learning laboratory, a teaching garden will be built to
include a bird and butterfly habitat, vegetables and other plants that grow in different seasons.
Each of the school's 700 students will be involved in lessons that will use this garden as a
powerful hands-on learning tool.

Alicia Stansell
Four Points Middle School, 7th Grade Science
Leander ISD
Grant Amount: $991.33
Joe Ciccarelli, Principal
*Protecting Our Earth*

Students will have the opportunity to learn about the affect humans have on local and global
ecosystems, while researching ways to lessen the human impact. Funds will be used to
purchase a ground water exploration model to see how water moves through soil into
underground aquifers and also learn how water is cleaned using a water treatment activity.

Kelly Chapman
Northwest Elementary, Kindergarten
Pflugerville ISD
Grant Amount: $534.59
Dave Bauman, Principal
*The World Through My Eyes*
Kindergarten students will have the opportunity to use digital photography to take and archive photos in order to deepen their understanding of science through technology. While utilizing the cameras for science is the main goal of the project, they will also help provide more meaning and understanding of their world in other subject areas as they will be able to take and discuss pictures they feel illustrate the various topics.

Peggy Pruett  
Hillcrest Elementary, K-5th grade Intervention  
Del Valle ISD  
Grant Amount: $1000.00  
Ray Prentice, Principal  
*The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*

Focusing on boys in grades 3rd-5th who have been identified as struggling or in need of intervention, the goal of the project is to provide them with more interesting reading materials in order to improve skills and testing outcomes.

Lisa Leigh  
Mills Elementary School, Kindergarten/ESL/Inclusion  
Austin ISD  
Grant Amount: $625.70  
Patricia Butler, Principal  
*Math Extravaganza*

The goal of this project is to develop math investigation bags for 22 kindergarten students to take home and work on with their parents to reinforce math skills they are mastering in the classroom. These bags will include math literature books, games, puzzles and activities to engage parents and students.

Marcela Sanz Blanco  
Widen Elementary School  
Austin ISD  
Grant Amount: $855.08  
Kimberly Royal, Principal  
*Paw’s Reading Lab*

Funds will be used to start a Spanish Reading Lab with comprehensive reading programs for Spanish speaking students using resources in their home language. The program selected, *Reading Naturally*, includes text selections that include Social Studies and Science curriculum, as well.
This project will give twelve students the opportunity to create a design, develop a budget and build an outdoor classroom that will be enjoyed by over a thousand other children in the school. The project will allow students to utilize math and language arts skills to develop the plan in addition to social skills necessary to work together to complete the classroom. Plus, this classroom will be enjoyed for many years down the road.

This project will allow the school to initiate a new elective course to attract and prepare students for quiz bowl, a competitive, academic, interscholastic activity. Funds will be used to purchase three 10-player buzzer systems, which will be made available to 750 students that may take the course. In addition, an additional 300 students may utilize the buzzer systems for grade-level competitions, student vs. staff competitions, etc.

Music students in all grades will have the opportunity to learn how music is recorded, including the technology behind music mixing, manipulation and editing. The goal is to provide hands on experience with software and equipment to increase their understanding of what they are listening to on the radio and on CDs/digital recordings. It will also provide a resource for parents and students to learn music classroom repertoire at home.
David O'Dell  
*Anderson High School, 11*th* Grade Physics/Astronomy*  
*Austin ISD*  
*Grant Amount: $919.00*  
*Donna Houser, Principal*  
*Spectacular Spectra*

This project will provide real-world technology that scientists actually use in the laboratory to observations, predictions and testing of waves and the electromagnetic spectrum. Students will be producing high quality spectroscopic data on stars, something that has never been done at the high school level! The data will be used to build a spectral catalog of stars that can be compared with research from other institutes in order to engineer better ways of improving accuracy.

Jennifer McCauley  
*John B. Connally High School, Librarian*  
*Pflugerville ISD*  
*Grant Amount: $990.00*  
*Daniel Garcia, Principal*  
*Shoot for the STAAR*

Utilizing Nook E-Reader technology, targeted students will benefit from the librarian's expertise in reading strategies while being matched with appropriate literature in order to improve reading ability and increase their chances of passing the Reading TAKS or STAAR. The grant will be used to purchase ten Nook E-readers. The school will purchase and download various novels and other literature at the students' instructional level. The aim is to encourage student choice and a love of reading in these young people while allowing them to practice and develop the skills and strategies of good readers.

Lynne Wilson and Chrissy Hall  
*Laurel Mountain Elementary School, 1*st* & 2*nd* Grade*  
*Round Rock ISD*  
*Grant Amount: $500.00*  
*Jan Richards, Principal*  
*Raz-Kids Home Reading Program*

The Raz-Kids computer program allows each first grader to have access to multiple books on their instructional reading level through their home computers. Students are able to choose books they are interested in or find books about a variety of subjects that support their specific reading needs. After reading the books, students take a short comprehension quiz to assess their understanding of the text.
Sandra Thompson  
Pflugerville Elementary School, 4th Grade  
Pflugerville ISD  
Grant Amount: $490.00  
Genia Antoine, Principal  
Multiplication Boot Camp  

The Boot Camp is an activity focusing on helping students master multiplication and division using timed tests. Completing each level will result in a promotion in rank (e.g. sergeant, lieutenant, colonel, etc). Achieving higher ranks awards them opportunities for fun events like having lunch with their teacher and helping out with test administration. This project will allow students to engage in friendly competitions, while setting personal goals for learning and meeting educational objectives.

Vanessa Shields  
Graham Elementary School, PreK-5th Grade  
Austin ISD  
Grant Amount: $985.25  
Blane Helwig, Principal  
Outdoor Interactive Learning Environment  

This project will allow the students participating in the Graham Gardeners garden club the opportunity to add 25 fig, pecan, pomegranate, loquat, and persimmon trees to their school. The garden currently provides vegetables and herbs that are used to supplement student lunches. These trees will magnify the impact of the garden and also provide shade, an outdoor space for teaching lessons, and additional nutrition to the students' food. This will project will not only beautify the school's campus, but also the surrounding community and be a source of pride for all!

About The Junior League of Austin:  
The Junior League of Austin is an organization of 2,400 women committed to promoting voluntarism, developing the potential of women, and improving the community through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. Its purpose is exclusively educational and charitable. On an annual basis, The Junior League of Austin contributes over one million dollars to the Austin community and its members volunteer approximately 100,000 hours. For more information about The Junior League of Austin, call (512)467-8982 or visit www.jlaustin.org.