

Lending a Helping Hand

WASB Business Honor Roll highlights successful partnerships between businesses and school districts

Shelby Anderson

In an effort to recognize the valuable partnerships between businesses and school districts, the Wisconsin Association of School Boards annually sponsors a Business Honor Roll. School districts in Wisconsin are invited to nominate up to five local businesses or organizations that helped provide expanded learning opportunities for students,

financial support, or any other initiative that has supported their local schools in the past year. The WASB received nominations from school districts across the state. You can view the complete Business Honor Roll at wasb.org. Here's a look at some of the successful partnerships that help support Wisconsin public schools.

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF BROWN DEER

CG Schmidt

"Above and Beyond"

At the start of this school year, students at the School District of Brown Deer showed up for the first day to find their schools and campus completely renovated and renewed. Thanks to the work of the School District of Brown Deer and their construction management firm, CG Schmidt, the keys to the new schools were handed over on time, on budget, and ready for the new school year.

While CG Schmidt only had three months to renovate the district's elementary school, add a wing onto the new middle school/high school, and build a new high school field-house, the planning and development began five years ago when the firm evaluated the district's facility needs. Dan Davis, senior vice president of CG Schmidt, said the district had outgrown its elementary school and had empty space in the high school. The project solved that problem by renovating the elementary school and adding a seventh- and eighth-grade

wing to the high school.

"We were able to prioritize their needs," Davis said. "We looked through literally dozens of options for the district to find the option that satisfied all of the district's needs."

The firm helped the district through the referendum process all the way to the completion of the school project. School board member Michelle Schofield and Director of Finance Emily Koczela said the project was completed efficiently yet transparently — providing detailed expense reports.



Throughout the building and renovation project this summer, CG Schmidt also held regular tours for the school board and community.

“It was just such a transparent process,” Schofield said. “We really felt like they went above and beyond.”

Not only were the district’s facility needs met, but the project also rejuvenated the district’s grounds, adding signs and walking paths and planting hundreds of native plants. Schofield also recalls that early in the process, the school board wanted some panels installed in the high school commons. The panels were non-essential in function but completed

the vision of the architects and made the renovated commons look much nicer. At one point during the project, the school board decided they couldn’t justify the expense of the panels. However, CG Schmidt donated the panels to the district and had them installed at no extra cost.

“We wanted something we couldn’t afford and they figured out ways to make it happen,” said Koczela.

In a special ribbon-cutting ceremony at the beginning of the school year, students, parents and community members were invited to tour the new facilities and partici-

School officials, students and teachers from the Brown Deer School District open their newly renovated school campus — built and designed with the help of CG Schmidt.

pate in special activities.

“This project has transformed our community, our educational practices, all in an effort to create a legacy for student learning in Brown Deer,” said Superintendent Deb Kerr. “We are so proud of our new 21st century learning spaces and how this project has touched every classroom in the district through new construction, renovation, and modernization.” □

“This project [with CG Schmidt] has transformed our community, our educational practices, all in an effort to create a legacy for student learning in Brown Deer.” — Deb Kerr, superintendent

Farmers State Bank along with other community organizations, help support Reality Days where students from the Hillsboro School District learn how to take on adult responsibilities.



SCHOOL DISTRICT OF HILLSBORO
Farmers State Bank

Financial Literacy and More

Thanks to a long-standing partnership, students in the School District of Hillsboro get schooled in the basics of personal finance. Carol Jefferies, vice president of Farmers State Bank in Hillsboro, works with the school district — providing curriculum and serving as a guest speaker for the district’s financial literacy classes.

The education begins in elemen-

tary school where students are given a basics of personal finance presentation, which Jefferies and Farmers State Bank help to organize. In high school, all 12th-grade students at Hillsboro High School are required to take a “Real Life Economics” class.

“Financial literacy is important for all students because this is a topic that will pertain to everyone in their life,” said Curt Bisarek, superintendent of the School District of Hillsboro. “At some point, all students will start making financial

decisions and they need to have a good understanding of financing to help them make educated decisions that will have a positive effect on their lives.”

Farmers State Bank also supports the school in other ways — supporting high school athletics, a trip for students of the month, and more.

“Farmers State Bank has a long-standing history of helping to provide the means to support educational and extra-curricular opportunities for the district,” said Bisarek. “They help to fund many education opportunities for our students, which help to develop growth and achievement along with gaining leadership skills.”

Bisarek said that the local bank also helps raise funds for additional classroom items, trips with educational experiences, and competitions for extra-curricular groups. In addition, the bank purchases advertising for sports programs every year and donated funds for the purchase of scoreboards for the gymnasium in 2010.

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“Whenever our school district has needed assistance, Farmers State Bank has always been there for us,” Bisarek said.

Jefferies said Farmers State Bank has been a partner of the school district long before she started working there.

“Being in a small town, you’ve got to support the school because that’s a major part of the community.” □

MIDDLETON-CROSS PLAINS AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Willy Street Co-op

Educating Open Minds

As a community grocery store, the Willy Street Co-op West, located in Middleton, is focused on reaching out to the community. To Mike Byrne, manager of the store, that means connecting with the Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District.

“It’s our mission as a co-op to be engaged with the community,” Byrne said. “We view the high school as a lot of young, open minds ready to learn.”

The co-op helps educate those young minds in a number of ways. The co-op plays a part in Middleton High School’s Reality Days where students are given a budget and go into the community to see what they can afford as far as a place to live, what they can buy at the grocery store, etc.

Other classes, like the district’s ecology course also visit the co-op for tours and to learn about locally produced foods. The co-op also provides financial support for the gardens at a number of the Middleton schools and the high school’s Growing Food and Sustainability program.

When the co-op holds special events, it includes the school district. At one of the co-op’s community

programs, Middleton-Cross Plains school officials spoke about referendum building projects and efforts to make them environmentally friendly.

Among other initiatives, the co-op has also sponsored the Middleton High School’s Choral Orchestra’s annual fundraiser, it serves as a sponsor of the high school boys varsity soccer team, and has donated food for blood drives at the high school.

“Willy Street Co-Op has been a great partner with us over the past few years,” said Perry Hibner, community relations specialist at the Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District. “Our students have bene-

THE COMPLETE

WASB Business Honor Roll

To view the complete Business Honor Roll visit wasb.org.

Select “Communications” and then “Business Honor Roll.” The WASB thanks the participating school districts and businesses for their work on behalf of their students and communities.

“It’s our mission as a co-op to be engaged with the community. We view the high school as a lot of young, open minds ready to learn.” — Mike Byrne



Among other initiatives, the Willy Street Co-op helps support school gardens in the Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District.

The Tomah High School Marching Band plays in downtown Tomah as part of the community tailgate, organized by F&M State Bank. Proceeds from the event go toward supporting the band and arts at the high school.



fitted so much from the opportunities and support they have provided. We hope this partnership only grows stronger in the years to come.” □

APPLETON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

ThedaCare

Promoting Reading

For the past 17 years, the Appleton Area School District’s United for Reading Success (UFRS) has helped thousands of first-grade students develop good reading skills. Each school day, volunteer tutors read to students, listen to students read, and use word-work techniques to help students become successful readers. By the end of the school year, the

majority of these students are reading at grade level or higher.

For the past several years, ThedaCare, a community health system consisting of five hospitals and numerous clinics, has helped support Appleton’s UFRS program. An employee at ThedaCare has served on the UFRS advisory board, which provides direction and advice to the ongoing management of the UFRS program.

ThedaCare also provided a monetary gift to the program, which, this year, allowed the district to purchase a book for each student who participated in the program. Additionally, when extensive revisions were made to the program that resulted in the

need to reprint materials for the program’s tutors, ThedaCare used its print center to produce the materials at no cost to the district.

“ThedaCare’s ongoing generosity continues to help many first-grade students become better readers,” wrote Appleton Area Superintendent Lee Allinger on the nomination form.

ThedaCare has also worked with school districts throughout the Fox Valley area through the Healthcare Alliance, which, among other activities, connects students to healthcare professionals and learning experiences. Opportunities that ThedaCare has helped set up include job shadowing and healthcare simulation classes. □

TOMAH AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

F&M Bank

Supporting All Facets

Cindy Zahrte, superintendent of the Tomah Area School District, nominated F&M Bank. Zahrte said Peter Reichardt, president of F&M Bank, has gone above and beyond to reach out and support the school district.

“He just embodies the spirit of our schools and really believes in the importance of supporting your schools,” Zahrte said.

For the last couple of years, F&M Bank has held a tailgate party in downtown Tomah before a football game. The Tomah High School Marching Band plays at the tailgate event and all money raised through food sales go directly to the marching band and the Tomah High School Art Honor Program.

F&M Bank also holds a special

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honor breakfast to recognize the district's top students. Each student also nominates a teacher to be recognized at the event. Additionally, the bank donated \$500 to be given to a school organization or class in the district. The students selected Advanced Placement Biology to receive the donation.

Over the past couple of school years, the bank has also made donations to the Tomah High School Show Choir, the elementary special education program, and an elementary literacy program.

Zahrte said Reichardt, who is the son of a teacher, often speaks to students about the importance of serving your community and giving back.

"He does so much that helps bring our community together for our schools," Zahrte said. □

RIO COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Rio Shopper Newspaper

Spreading Positive News

In a small community, the newspaper is often one of the only ways to get information and news about the community. Kathy Lueloff, who

owns the *Rio Shopper*, a weekly newspaper in Rio, works hard to include the Rio Community School District in each issue of the paper.

A section of the newspaper, the "School Scoop" is devoted to positive school news. Whether it be an outstanding student or other positive school news, it is included in the newspaper. Lueloff also works with the district's Future Farmers of America program, the district's music parents, athletics booster clubs and others to make sure information about the district's various events and activities are advertised. In most cases, Lueloff creates ads for these groups and runs them in the paper at no cost.

"Kathy and the staff at the *Rio Shopper* are always there to publish and promote the various announcements and school news in a timely and informative manner," said school board vice president Bob Hagenow.

The newspaper has also been loyally publishing the school board meetings agendas and minutes at a nominal fee. Additionally, Lueloff serves as coordinator of the school district's newsletter, which is pub-



Each edition of the *Rio Shopper* includes positive news from the Rio School District.

lished nine times a year.

Lueloff, who has had four children go through the Rio schools, understands the role of the school district in the community.

"The school district is very important to the health and life of the community," Lueloff said. "Without the school, the community would suffer." ■

Anderson is editor of Wisconsin School News.

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