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News

Teacher to start movie club at DePaolo Middle School

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SOUTHINGTON — For the past few years, Joanne Grant has wanted to start a movie club at DePaolo Middle School for her students. But given the current condition of the economy and officials' effort to keep taxes down, such an extravagance was out of the question.

Tuesday, however, Grant was one of 10 teachers who received a \$500 "mini-grant" from the Southington Education Foundation. With that money she will be able to start the club, which will be an after-school program originally focusing on service projects.

"It's nice to get students to drop their barriers and communicate with others they don't normally connect with," she said.

After they finish the service announcements, which will be shown in classrooms, students in the club can work in groups on their own films. Grant hopes to have an annual film festival at the school so students can show off the movies.

The Southington Education Foundation held a ceremony at Thalberg Elementary School's library to announce the winning teachers and projects.

The foundation funds extra-curricular projects that are not part of the school's usual programs.

George Costanzo, chairman of the grant selection committee, said the foundation started in early 2009.

"There are a lot of bright people here with energy," he said. "We went to the Connecticut Council of Education Foundations meeting and people said it usually takes two years to do what we did in less than one."

Other projects that won mini-grants included a sculpture garden in the courtyard of DePaolo Middle School. Students will use broken pottery and found art mosaics to make the sculptures. Flanders

Elementary School will get a science lab, which will include an aquarium and an “eco lab” to teach students about caring for the earth. The school will also hold a kindergarten literacy night. Gina Krar of Thalberg Elementary School will use iPods to help student improve their reading. South End Elementary School will host a “kids speak out” program for grades two to five and a “life cycle of a chicken” program for first graders, where they will observe eggs in an incubator and learn how to care for them, which could include taking a baby chick home for the night. At Derynoski Elementary School students will use microphones connected to the school computers to listen to themselves and monitor their fluency, and fifth-graders will use document cameras to share, discuss and evaluate their written work.

Southington High School will start a “Student Sunshine Program” where students will provide meals and other necessary items to help fellow students who are under stress or in need because of emergency situations.

“The students want to cheer up fellow students,” said Sharon DePucchio, a social worker at the school. “They can help based on their skills.”

Costanzo said the foundation will send out a letter to teachers asking for more mini-grant applications this week and will distribute another round in the spring for projects for the next academic year.

Dr. Joseph Erardi, Superintendent of schools, decided to start the education foundation.

“I feel like I’m standing on top of Mount Everest,” he said at the event. “All these people worked hard for the children of Southington. I am flat-out thrilled with the work the Southington Education Foundation has done.”

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