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Kids In Need Foundation Grants Classroom Supplies



Kids show a big THANK YOU.

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This story was written by Citizen Journalist Nick Schaefer. We encourage you to click the Tip Jar to support this writer's work.

Seeing a teacher burst into tears is not necessarily a bad thing. It is not out of the ordinary for a teacher to get emotional after receiving assistance from the Kids In Need Foundation in getting the appropriate funds for classroom supplies for their students.

It is difficult to excel in an educational environment without pencils, pens, notebooks or other basic school supplies. School, Home & Office Products Association (SHOPA) Kids In Need Foundation, works to insure that no child lacks the basic school supplies necessary for learning; and provides a means to reward teachers for bringing creativity and new ideas into the classroom, according to Penny Hawk, the managing director of the foundation.

"Since we (Kids In Need Foundation, founded in 1995) were established by the School, Home, & Office Products Association, the choice of school supplies was tied directly to the industry that founded us," said Hawk. "The founders believed that not having school supplies negatively impacts a child's opportunity to fully participate in learning experiences at school."

According to Hawk the effects of simply having adequate school supplies has enhanced students learning. Test scores of students at James Weldon Johnson Elementary School in Chicago had the percentage of students at or above the national norms in reading rise two percent (16-18 percent) the year after they began receiving supplies. Math scores rose from 17 to 20 percent in that same time period. Just two years later, reading and math scores rose to 27 and 37 percent respectively.

Hawk said that the Mattie Tyson, principal of James Weldon, credited much of this improvement to getting supplies from the Kids In Need Resource Center.

Between July 15 and September 30 of each year, certified K-12 teachers from public, private, and parochial schools may apply for grants of \$100 to \$500 to purchase materials for innovative classroom projects, according to Hawk. National sponsors of the program are Jo-Ann Stores and Office Depot and regional sponsors are Fred Meyer, Publix and Sav-On Office Supplies.

The applications, which teachers can complete at www.kidsinneed.net, are evaluated on the basis of innovativeness, replication feasibility, clarity of objectives, and overall educational value. The grant recipients are announced at the end of October after a four-tiered evaluation process.

Currently SHOPA Kids In Need Foundation includes 21 resource centers in the National Network. Nine of those were established independently and joined the Network as affiliates, according to Hawk.

"These types of free stores for teachers are all over the country or there are people interested in establishing Centers in their communities," said Hawk. "We look at ourselves as a means of support for these Centers, as well as for individuals or organizations that wish to establish these types of Centers in their communities."

Hawk said one of the goals is to grow the National Network to include Centers in all major cities in the country. There is an outreach program called School Box, for cities that do not have a Resource Center, which distributes supplies directly to school districts and schools through supply giveaways.

"We provide donations of product once they are part of the National Network, and facilitate the exchange of best practices among the Centers," said Hawk. "We hope to grow the National Network to include Centers in all major cities in all states."

"It is a goal of the Teacher Grants program to widely distribute the lessons plans of these award winning projects. Nearly 400 lesson plans are currently available to teachers on our Web site, but we hope to get CD's of these lesson plans into the hands of as many teachers as possible," added Hawk.

Last year, the Foundation awarded nearly \$104,000 in Teacher Grants. Since its founding, it has distributed around \$200 million in school supplies through the National Network Resource Centers and has awarded \$665,000 in grant monies.

"Generally speaking, teachers clearly appreciate the work Kids In Need is doing to help their students succeed in the classroom and to alleviate the burden teachers often assume of trying to fund purchases of school and classroom supplies out of their own pockets," said Hawk.

Hawk, who has been with the Foundation since 1999, enjoys her work greatly, having been a former teacher.

"The faces of those children who have never owned their own notebook or who have to borrow a pencil every day or who are embarrassed at the beginning of every year because they do not have new school supplies - to see those faces light up when they are given new school supplies are rewarding moments in my life," said Hawk.

This story was produced by Happynews Citizen Journalist Nick Schaefer. Nick Schaefer is a volunteer staff writer and editor for HappyNews.com. Nick lives in New Holland, PA, and works as a college career counselor and freelance writer. He has a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism/Public Relations and a Master of Arts in Counseling. Nick's ultimate life goal is to make a positive difference in the world. He volunteers for numerous nonprofit organizations.