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Mark Twain Students Team Up with the Bread Shed

OCTOBER 03RD 2021 BY DEE LOFLIN

Mark Twain Students Team Up with the Bread Shed

Mark Twain School students are gaining perhaps just as much as they give while helping to address the food insecurity in the community, organizers say.

Since the beginning of the calendar year, teacher Darla Nunn has served as chaperone over the volunteer students at the Bread Shed. The group assists with the nonprofit's A Better Childhood program, which supplies monthly food baskets to R-I families in need; the senior food distribution in cooperation with the SEMO Food Bank; and diaper drives in collaboration with the Diaper Bank of the Ozarks.

“Kids can always find the negative, but what do you bring to the table to make it positive,” asked Nunn, who leads the Jobs for America’s Graduates program at Mark Twain. “I can’t do it all by myself, but as a collective group like the Bread Shed, we can work together to make things better.

The community service functions as a resume enhancer for students, she noted, fitting in with JAG-Missouri’s project-based learning model. In addition, the short field trips serve as a motivator for life skills students who enjoy a change of pace in the school day, and meet the requisite building expectations.

“I know I have food in a home where I can get a drink when I want, and go to sleep in a bed,” high school student Tristan White commented. “There are people out there who are hungry and homeless and don’t have anything, and I can help them.”

Jim Ward, executive director of the Bread Shed, said the work could not be carried out without helpers like the students from Mark Twain. Besides greeting guests, he said that the young people load the boxes, which often include produce, cereal, snacks, eggs, meat, bread, canned goods, bottled water and more.

The arrangement initially began about five years ago with Junior High assistant principal Corey Jameson, then lead teacher at the former Poplar Bluff Graduation Center. “The worth ethic translated to the classroom,” he recalled.

“Each student that participated in the Bread Shed volunteer opportunity became better students in school,” Jameson said. “Helping others gave them a sense of self-worth and accomplishment, some of them hadn’t experienced in a long time or possibly ever.”

In addition to the programs that the students help with during the workweek, the faith-based organization rotates counties providing a mobile food pantry and clothing giveaway on weekends. Lastly, the Bread Shed serves a free hot meal on Sundays through its Breaking Bread program at its North D Street location, where mobile shower units were recently added. For more information on services available, please visit breadshed.org.

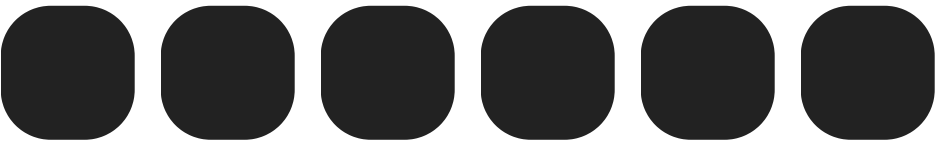
Pictured: Students (right to left) Tiffany Womack and Kennedy Robertson help load up a laundry basket carried by Caiden Politte of Mark Twain School on Wednesday, Sept. 22, at the Bread Shed.

Photo and article submitted by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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Sparklight Donates 50 Computers to Lake Road

SEPTEMBER 28TH 2021 BY DEE LOFLIN

Sparklight Donates 50 Computers to Lake Road

Sparklight recently donated 50 Google Chromebooks to Lake Road Elementary to be used to teach coding during latchkey as the school works toward its goal of incorporating STEM into its curriculum.

“Now more than ever, student access to computers is a necessity,” Sparklight Senior Vice President of Technology Services Ken Johnson stated in a press release. “By donating Chromebooks, we’re giving students in need the opportunity to use technology that will ultimately prepare them for a progressively digital workforce.”

A company representative reached out to Lake Road at the end of last school year, as part of its Chromebooks for Kids initiative. Sparklight has given away over 2,000 devices to Title I elementary schools in the markets where it offers broadband services.

The devices have allowed third grade teacher Michelle McDaniel to start the ‘Kids Who Code’ club during which she uses resources from Code.org and the Girls Who Code nonprofit to teach students how to code. Upward of 40 participants, grades 1-6, gather for about an hour and a half in the gymnasium each morning.

“My hope is that it will foster an interest in computer sciences,” McDaniel explained. “In this way, hopefully, the kids can also become interested in robotics and engineering.”

While the elementary schools are 1:1, the additional laptop cart brings Lake Road closer to realizing its vision of having a space dedicated to science, technology, engineering and math, according to Principal Rondi Vaughn.

“Having these computers in a cart for this purpose will allow us to give students the accessibility to technology while participating in these [activities] and not having to take any technology outside their classrooms,” Vaughn said. “Computers are an integral component of our students’ learning.”

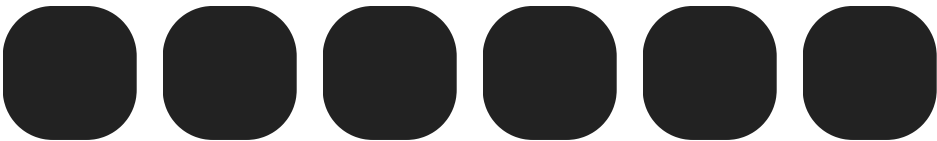
Pictured: Computer technicians Kyle Pearson (forefront) and Joe Salamone inventory Chromebooks on Tuesday, Aug. 24, in the conference room at Lake Road so teacher Michelle McDaniel (standing) can incorporate technology during latchkey.

Photo and article submitted by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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MRTF Funds Puppet Theater at PBJHS

SEPTEMBER 28TH 2021 BY DEE LOFLIN

MRTF Funds Puppet Theater at PBJHS

A Poplar Bluff Junior High faculty member has been awarded a \$500 grant from the Missouri Retired Teachers Foundation to create a puppet theater and purchase a digital camera for her drama elective.

Hilary Taylor was selected among nine grant recipients in Region 12 of the Missouri Retired Teachers Association out of 112 successful proposals throughout the state, plus 10 awarded to school support staff.

“This project will allow students to interpret literature through various dramatic representations,” Taylor wrote in her grant proposal entitled ‘Literature Through Drama.’ “Through these experiences students will increase their editing, peer review and comprehension skills.”

This is the fifth consecutive year that an R-I educator was among those regionally who submitted successful grants, bringing the running total for the school district to \$4,500 from the nonprofit. Since 2017, Taylor has been selected as a winner on two previous occasions – to enhance her robotics and honors English classes, respectively.

The MRTF is the fundraising arm of the association, made up of retired educators whose purpose is to promote the professional, social and economic welfare of all retired school employees, according to its website.

Pictured: (Left to right) Dr. Scott Dill, R-I superintendent; Mark Cook, MRTA Region 12 vice president; Hilary Taylor, Junior High teacher; Candace Warren, Junior High principal; Linda Surber, Butler County unit president; and Arleta Godwin, MRTA president.

Photo and article submitted by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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Designing Women Foundation Awards \$11.5K to Poplar Bluff

SEPTEMBER 14TH 2021 BY DEE LOFLIN

Designing Women Foundation Awards \$11.5K to Poplar Bluff

The Designing Women Foundation honored its scholarship recipients and Charlie Classics Reading Contest winners during a reception held last month at the Bloodworth House, awarding \$11,500 to students of Poplar Bluff Schools over the course of two years.

Thousand-dollar scholarship recipients of the Class of 2021 were Veilka Griffith, who is majoring in business administration; Morghyn McCain, nursing; Madison Moore, business; Lauren Robertson, medicine; Maria Polasek, nursing; and Austynn Dover, who received a technical scholarship to study aesthetics at the Technical Career Center.

The Foundation also honored Class of 2020 recipients, not recognized in person last year due to the public health crisis, including: Rhianna Johnston, undeclared major; Madison Smith, engineering; Elizabeth Gill, nursing; and Savannah Hudson, elementary education.

Charlie Classics winners included freshman Mackinley Cox, who won \$600 for reading 58 books over the past two years; junior Emmalein Pendley, who won \$600 for reading 35 during the same time period; and Hannah Tuttle of the Class of 2020, who was awarded \$300 for reading 14 books during her senior year.

The Designing Women Foundation is dedicated to the cultural and educational enrichment of deserving young people, and aims to promote literacy through its annual reading program open to Junior and Senior High students. The nonprofit organization also provides competitive scholarships to women, regardless of age, race or religion.

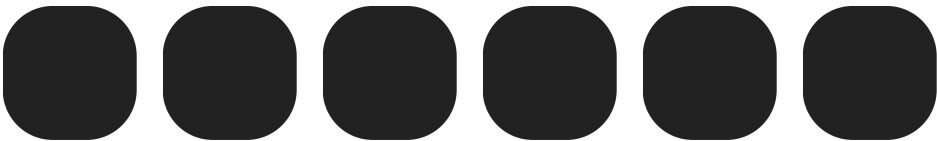
(Left to right) Madison Moore, Savannah Hudson, non-traditional scholarship recipient Kama Djambo, DWF board member Kathern Harris, Maria Polasek, Lauren Robertson, non-traditional student Amber Gargas, and DWF board member Dr. Kylie Divine.

Article and photo submitted by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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Walmart Donates Sanitizer to Poplar Bluff Schools

JULY 01ST 2021 BY DEE LOFLIN

Walmart Donates Sanitizer to Poplar Bluff Schools

Walmart has recently donated a pallet of hand sanitizer to Poplar Bluff Schools, among several other school districts in the area.

Over 75 cases containing nearly 1,000 individual bottles will be distributed to educators across the school system to help reduce the spread of germs in classrooms, according to a representative of the Supercenter.

Poplar Bluff school officials are appreciative of their community partners who have helped the district keep its doors open during the public health emergency.

Pictured: Dave Wooldridge of the R-I Maintenance Department picks up a pallet of hand sanitizer arranged by Amber Shepard, Walmart consumables team lead, on Tuesday, June 8.

Article and photo submitted by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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