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Laingsburg Community Schools to receive nearly \$50,000 in grant monies from community
Funds help support innovative programs that help attract school-of-choice students from 11 other districts

Laingsburg, Mich. – The Laingsburg Community Schools Board will receive about \$49,440 in grants at its meeting at 7 p.m. on Feb. 19 at the Laingsburg High School Multipurpose Room. The funds are being presented by the Laingsburg Educational Advancement Foundation (LEAF), Laingsburg Sports Boosters and Laingsburg Lions Club.

LEAF is providing its largest amount of grant funding to the district since its founding 22 years ago: \$22,400. LEAF's largest grant this year – \$6,000 – is going to a high school robotics program that will provide deep immersion for students into the design and building of robots, including sophisticated robotic programming. Its second-highest grantee is the K-5 science program which will receive \$5,000 toward new science kits. These projects, along with others funded by LEAF, are aligned with the national STEM program, which is improving science, technology, engineering and mathematics education, according to LCS Superintendent Matt Shastal.

Other 2013-14 LEAF grants range from \$1,800 for a third-grade nature curriculum to \$260 for a special math literacy magazine subscription for sixth graders. LEAF provides funding for programs that create innovative educational opportunities and maintain academic excellence. It does not fund items covered in the general fund budget. Grant dollars are raised through two annual events, individual donations, memorials and an endowment with the Capital Region Community Foundation. To date, it has donated more than \$200,000 to Laingsburg Schools.

The Laingsburg Lions Club is writing \$9,600 in checks to the district in partnership with LEAF for two of the major projects listed above. The first is a \$6,000 donation to the robotics program (for a total of \$12,000). An additional \$3,600 is being donated to enable a full set of elementary science kits (for a total of \$8,600). Additionally, two \$1,000 scholarships will be available to high school seniors this spring. The Lions Club funding comes from the group's local fundraising efforts, such as its annual Springtime Festival in May and charitable gaming events. Past Lions projects in support of the district have included defibrillators and flagpoles for the athletic fields and applications for the previously donated elementary school Leap Pads.

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The Laingsburg Sports Boosters presented \$17,440 to the school board for equipment, field maintenance, signage, injury prevention training, and AED and first aid training for all coaches. Its funds are raised largely through concession sales, advertising in its annual program books, charitable gaming events and individual donations. LSB also funds Laingsburg's entire freshman sports program, and provides scholarships for any family unable to cover the district's pay-to-play sports participation fees.

“The generosity of our community is to be commended,” said Shastal. “Donations of this magnitude simply would not be possible without parents, grandparents, teachers, staff, business owners, community leaders and many others who simply believe that our children’s education is a number-one priority. Everyone knows school districts’ funding is extremely tight. We can’t afford to provide enhanced educational, athletic, arts and extra-curricular opportunities like we used to, which makes groups like the sports boosters, Lions Club and LEAF so valuable.”

Laingsburg is second in school-of-choice enrollment in Shiawassee County, due largely to its commitment to the use of technology in education. Fifteen percent of its students – 171 – live in one of 11 districts outside of Laingsburg but choose to send their students to LCS for the exceptional instruction and extra-curricular offerings it has, added Shastal.

Approximately \$20,000 of the sports boosters and Lions money is coming from charity poker tournaments offered under the guidelines of the State of Michigan's charity gambling program, according to Dane Nickols, who is a member of all three contributing organizations and a long-time organizer of the booster’s and Lion’s fundraising efforts. The ability for nonprofits to raise funds from charity poker events is currently being challenged by Michigan Governor Rick Snyder who is seeking to eliminate the gambling program.

“Clearly we are concerned about the possibility that we will not have this valuable fundraising option anymore,” said Nickols. “These funds make so much possible, and we can raise a significant amount of money with the help of people outside of the Laingsburg community to supplement what our own residents do. This significant revenue could be irreplaceable for many charities.”

Almost all of the programs funded by the Lions, LEAF and sports boosters will take place or be initiated in the 2013-14 school year, according to Shastal.

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