

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

WILLIAMS-ROCKWELL EDUCATION GIFT FUND COMMITTEE AWARDS NEARLY \$85,000 IN GRANTS

\$82,831.60 was awarded to projects going on around the district in this round of funding

GARDNER- March 7, 2024- The Williams-Rockwell Educational Gift Fund Committee met on February 13, 2024 and March 7, 2024, to distribute this year's round of grants to applicants from the Gardner Public School System. The committee was able to distribute \$82,831.60 for 14 different projects which will take place over the remainder of the academic year and beyond.

Gardner's **Superintendent of Public Schools, Dr. Mark Pellegrino** remarked, "The Williams-Rockwell grants continue to generously give to Gardner Public Schools. These funds allow us to offer very creative programs that enhance the experience of our students beyond the core and essential expectations of our community. From service dogs to laser cutters, this program supports our students social emotional needs and academic growth. Thank you to everyone on the committee for supporting our students!"

The Williams-Rockwell Education Gift Fund was established in 2014 following the auction of Norman Rockwell's "Willie Gillis in the Convoy" painting. The fund was set up to provide financial assistance to projects and programs requested by the faculty and administration of Gardner Public Schools to enrich the experiences of Gardner's students. The grants are funded by the interest and capital gains earned from investments of the sale price of the painting.

From the auction to the disbursement of the grants, the Williams-Rockwell Educational Gift Fund has been a collective effort in bringing about a way to give back to the city and its students for years to come. To date, the Committee has awarded \$610,064.00.

"I am very happy to hear that we are able to continue to give back to our students through this program," said **Mayor Michael Nicholson** who serves as the Chair of the fund's Trustees. "The projects submitted for this year's round of funding were certainly unique and help provide valuable resources to help enrich our students' academic careers. This fund truly makes a big difference in helping Gardner Public Schools provide our students with a modern academic experience that stands out from other

districts. I'm looking forward to seeing our students take advantage of these programs in the future."

Council President Elizabeth Kazinskas added, "The Williams-Rockwell resource enriches the quality of our education in Gardner, and we are incredibly lucky to have it. These grants continue to serve their purpose providing valuable opportunities for our students each year. Such options would likely not be possible otherwise, or their funding would draw from the city's budget."

As required by the fund's governing statute, awards were given out to both arts related applications as well as applications that promote athletics and academics in our schools.

"The funds received by GMS from the Rockwell Grant will be used to help subsidize our 6th grade trip to Nature's Classroom," explained **Annette Lussier, Gardner Middle School Science Teacher**. "Students look forward to this trip every year! This amazing educational experience provides our students with an opportunity to think and learn about the natural world around us and more importantly our place in nature and how we, humans, are uniquely responsible for the stewardship of our planet. GMS would like to thank the Rockwell Grant committee for this award and their continued support for this unique and powerful educational experience."

"20 years ago when I started teaching at the middle school, I used the spotlights that were shared with the high school to light a lot of each production due to a lack of an auditorium at GMS," said **Joanne Landry, Gardner High School Music and Drama teacher**. "It was clear to me even then that the spotlights were not very effective and had two very different illumination capacities. One is very dim with fuzzy edges while the other is brighter but with no filter capabilities any more. They are also very bulky and heavy and difficult to transport from one school to the other. I am thrilled that after 20 years, we will finally be able to acquire new spotlights for the theater program. All the drama students from both the high school and middle school will be able to benefit from better lighting. The units are portable, quieter when in use, and use LED lighting so they will be less expensive to maintain. These should be easier to operate as well and we can have students on stage crew run the spots for the shows. I am excited to have the new spotlights shine brightly on our hard working performers."

“We are so excited to receive this grant for the Great East Festival for the 4th Grade Band,” said **Michelle Heffner, Gardner Elementary School Band Director**. “Great East provides a competitive opportunity for our young musicians in a supportive environment. Students will perform in front of a panel of judges and then receive a clinic where the judges will work with our 4th Grade band students to help them improve their playing, listening and ensemble skills. It is exciting to provide our youngest band students with this opportunity to demonstrate their skills in a real-life competitive setting and provide them with their first experience with adjudication! The students are eager to begin learning their music and are excited to demonstrate their skills and knowledge in front of a panel of well-respected music educators. Thank you to the committee for providing our 4th Grade Band with this opportunity!”

“We ordered these boards a few years ago and they were so successful in their ease of setting up artworks that we wanted to obtain more,” said **Frances LeMieux, Gardner High School Art Teacher**. “This has allowed us to be able to rotate where our All School Art Exhibitions are held, in an effort to connect with all facets of the community. The venue change allows for greater community access, allowing the public to see all of our schools, but also gives the host school an opportunity to display a higher amount of its students' work. The color of the boards are varied, which will show off our art pieces better. The grey backing will help to specifically show off works that have a darker composition, that we have noticed get lost while viewing on our current black backings.

By law, the membership on the Board of Trustees who votes to award the grants is made up of three members appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council, the City Treasurer, the Superintendent of Schools, a member of the School Committee, the City Council President or their designee, and the Mayor or his designee who serves as chair.

A full listing of the grants awarded can be found here:

Teacher	School	Amount
Briana Aldrich & Hilary Comeau	Gardner Elementary School	\$800.00
Learning Through Arts & Music. Alphabet Bingo; Memory Match; Go Fish; Alphabet Boards; picture magnets; crafts		

Michelle Heffner	Gardner Elementary School	\$3,000.00
Great East Band Festival for 4th Grade Band Defray the cost of attendance for students in the 4 th Grade Band for the annual Great East Band Festival		
Ashley Chicoine	Gardner Elementary School	\$3,000.00
MWCC Theater Field Trip Funds to defray the cost of students attending a matinee showing of Finding Nemo the Musical		
Frances LeMieux	All Gardner Public Schools District	\$13,000.00
Exhibition Display Panels Supply all three schools with identical artwork display panels for art shows		
Annette Lussier	Gardner Middle School	\$20,000.00
Natures Classroom Field Trip Defray the cost of students attending Natures Classroom		
Derek Beauregard	Gardner Academy	\$2,000.00
Intramural Fitness and Recreation Supplies Expand and improve the GALT Intramural Fitness Program by providing supplies for different sporting events		
Joanne Landry	Gardner High School	\$1,900.00
Light 'Em Up! Purchase two new spotlights for the Gardner High School Auditorium		
Denise Ulrich & Stephanie Curtis	Gardner Elementary School	\$3,750.00
Smile Project with Bren Bataclan Artist Bren Bataclan would become an artist in residence for a week at Gardner Elementary School and host assemblies to all grade levels on mural paintings encouraging students to become artists		
Douglas Lepisto	Gardner High School	\$ 5,420.00
Tuba or Not Tuba: That is the Question Purchase a new concert tuba for the Gardner High School Concert Band		
Janet Henderson	Gardner Academy	\$1,300.00
Student Sound Lab Equip the Elm Street School Auditorium with components for being artistically creative during advisory periods		

Kelly McGavin	Gardner Academy	\$5,500.00
GALT Laser Cutter Purchase a new state of the art laser cutter for Gardner Academy for classes		
Melissa Henry	Gardner Elementary School	\$10,000.00
GES Facility Service Animal Cover the cost to train a service/emotional support/comfort dog to be used to assist the students at Gardner Elementary School		
Maureen Horn	Gardner High School	\$6,594.60
Baby, Think it Over Purchase electronic baby simulators and software for students to learn everything needed to properly take care of a baby for GHS Health Classes		
Julio Decarvalho	Gardner Middle School	\$2,000.00
Peer Mediation Program Provide training materials to teach students about peer mediation to create a positive school climate		
Johanna Ottino	Gardner High School	\$4,100.00
Study Space Creation Purchase furniture to create new study spaces in the Gardner High School Library		