

ABILENE EDUCATION FOUNDATION



2016-2017
Annual Report

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MISSION

The Abilene Education Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)3 community organization created to promote and enhance excellence in education for the students of the Abilene Independent School District through the enrichment of its programs.

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ABILENE
EDUCATION
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WHAT TEACHER INSPIRED YOU THE MOST?

A message from AEF President & Executive Director

What teacher inspired you the most? Perhaps it was your Kindergarten teacher, a coach, middle school math teacher, the bus driver, a counselor, your high school art teacher, or even a principal who helped you along the way. Growing up, most of us had at least one remarkable educator who influenced us, encouraged us to do better, aim a little higher, or just be more self-reliant. When you think about your favorite teacher, words that come to mind might be “caring,” “encouraging,” “dedicated,” “passionate,” or “knowledgeable.” Perhaps your favorite teacher simply made you feel special.

Thanks to YOU, AEF is able to help our teachers and students feel important, valued, and special, just like your favorite teacher did when you were growing up. The 2016-2017 school year was one of inspiration for AEF as we continued to grow our programs, including our STAR Teacher Grants, Judy Dudley Memorial GIFT Grants, Young Masters Juried Art Exhibition (which celebrated their ten-year anniversary and announced a new endowment), the COOL College Advising program, Pass for Success, Scholarships, and more. We also had another successful Cajun Festival which you can read about on page 13. We hope you will enjoy reading our report, including the inspirational pictures and quotes from AISD teachers making a difference each and every day. We also hope you will feel proud of the careful way your contributions have been invested in the lives of our students over the last year. Your participation with us has provided for sustainable growth and allowed our programs to have an even greater impact.

As we begin the new school year, AEF is full of excitement for the journey ahead. We are deeply thankful for YOU and your support. Each time we witness the joy in the eyes of a teacher who has received a classroom grant for a special project, or when our high school seniors receive a scholarship to attend college, we are reminded - behind every successful student is a dedicated teacher, but behind every successful teacher is a dedicated community. What an honor it is to serve AEF with so many other dedicated board members, volunteers, and community members! In a rapidly changing world, thank YOU for helping inspire our teachers and children in AISD to reach their full potential.



Mike Breckenridge
2017-2018 AEF Board President



Christine Curtis-Carr
Executive Director



STAR GRANTS

Supporting Teachers with Academic Resources

Hoots, hollers, and a whole lot of laughing are just some of the sounds you might hear as you enter a winning classroom on Prize Parade Day! STAR (Supporting Teachers with Academic Resources) Grants are awarded each September for classroom projects that support curriculum and enrichment activities. Members of the AEF board and AISD administration surprise both teachers and students by entering the classroom with noisemakers, balloons, an oversized check and of course, real monies for projects ranging from books to flexible seating, fields trips, and, so much more. Every year AEF grants teachers in AISD funds to help with innovative classroom projects.

The STAR Teacher Grants are funded primarily through the AISD Payroll Deduction Donation Campaign, individual donors, and matching funds from Kaye Price-Hawkins and the Greathouse Foundation. In September of 2016, additional classroom grants were funded by the 21st Century Learning Mary Ann Polnick Memorial Funds. Mary Ann was a 35-year educator who spent 31 of those years within AISD. Additional support for the 2016 STAR Grant program was provided by Lou and Robert O. Briley.

AWARD: \$50,000



THE JUDY DUDLEY MEMORIAL GIFT GRANT

Giving Incentives to First-time Teachers

“Nervous,” “excited,” and “extremely grateful” are just some of the words AISD’s new-to-the-profession teachers used to describe their emotions as chair Mike Dudley and AEF staff passed out GIFT grants to 71 new-to-the-profession teachers in August of 2016 at new teacher orientation. The Judy Dudley Memorial GIFT Grants are awarded to AISD employees who are teaching for the first time. Grant funds are for additional classroom materials to enhance those provided by the school district.

“Thank you so much for the first year teacher gift! It was such a surprise and helped take some of the financial burden off my small family. I am so grateful to be teaching in the community.”

- Hannah Ware, new-to-the-profession teacher

Judy Dudley, a teacher at Fannin Elementary, understood the importance of creating an inviting classroom for children to learn and grow. GIFT Grants are funded by Mike Dudley, Pat Dudley, AISD payroll deduction, retired teachers and The Martha Scott Carlson Endowment Fund held at Community Foundation of Abilene. Martha Scott Carlson, a retired teacher, provided the first donation to begin the GIFT Grant program.

AWARD: \$10,650



AEF SCHOLARSHIPS

"I would like to extend you all my complete gratitude for your generosity in granting me a scholarship from AEF. Your benevolence and willingness to help the next generation will help me tremendously in achieving my career goals and representing Abilene and my school proudly!"

-Colin Kappel, 2017 AISD Graduate

"I want to thank you for your effort and support towards students like me. This scholarship has greatly helped me be able to attend the college of my choice without the burden of so much debt. Thank you so very much for all you do!"

-Olivia Montgomery, 2017 AISD Graduate

AEF Scholarships are designed to reward deserving students of AISD, like Olivia and Colin, with financial assistance, in an effort to make the transition from high school to college as seamlessly as possible, while minimizing post-graduation debt. The AEF Scholarship program has seen an increase in the quality and quantity of applications (over 80 last year) in recent years due to the partnership with AEF's COOL program and the rising costs of funding a college education. The COOL College Advisors encourage students to apply for as many scholarships as possible to avoid huge post-graduation debt. AEF Scholarships are funded through the annual **Cajun Festival fundraiser, endowment earnings, class alumni reunions, memorials and honorariums, individual donors, and AISD payroll deduction.** AEF scholarships are matched (with certain guidelines) by Abilene Christian University, Cisco College, Hardin-Simmons University, and McMurry University for students choosing to attend a local university.

AEF scholarships granted in 2016-2017 include: AEF Scholarships, AISD Transportation, Royce Curtis Excellence in Education, AHS Alumni, Michele Scott Memorial, Jerry Taylor Memorial, Coach John McCabe Memorial, Meta Alice Keith Bratten Foundation, Cougar Nation, CHS Alumni, Trevor Clark Memorial, TSTC Scholarship, Citizens Bank of Abilene, Johnny Ortega, Jr. Memorial, and Young Masters Juried Art Exhibition.

Award: \$36,200*

*Award amount does not include Young Masters Scholarships



YOUNG MASTERS JURIED ART EXHIBITION

Ten Year Celebration!

“Thank you for the award that I received as part of the Young Masters Juried Art Exhibition. It was truly an honor and was deeply appreciated. This exhibition has allowed me to feel what being an artist is like and has made me come to the realization that art is what I want to do professionally. It was an amazing experience and I cannot wait for next year.”

- Ivan Martinez, 2016-17 Young Master Artist

The Young Masters Juried Art Exhibition celebrated its 10th anniversary show at The Grace Museum last year. The committee received 84 pieces for consideration, and 44 were selected from the Advanced Placement Studio Art courses. The Selection Committee was composed of three area artists - Burgess Thomas, Bill Wright Jr. and Pedro Rivera. They selected the show, and all the 2D entries were professionally framed by Abilene Frame and Art. Marshall Harris, a professional artist in Texas, served as the judge and awarded Best of Show, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Places, Merit and Honorable Mention winners. Prior to this year’s reception, Mr. Harris began a new tradition by speaking to students about being an artist and his personal journey from NFL player to professional artist. Since it was the 10th anniversary, the reception included a display of all the Best in Show pieces since inception of the program and, with the exception of one, all of the past judges attended the event. A dinner in their honor was held afterward on the rooftop of the Grace Museum. Two new scholarships were awarded. One was in honor of Martha Kiel, a long-time art teacher in AISD. A scholarship fund was also established in her honor at the Community Foundation of Abilene. A master class with Bill Wright was awarded to one photography student as well. The awards ceremony had over 200 in attendance and included a mayoral proclamation. This project extends the supporting role AEF has with AISD and will impact the future of all the students selected for the show, as well as all AP Art students, by inspiring them to reach their full potential. The Young Masters Juried Art Exhibition is funded through grants received by the HeArts for the Arts Abilene Cultural Arts Council/City of Abilene, O’Donnell Foundation, individual and corporate donors, and AISD payroll deduction.

AWARD: \$10,000

EXPENSES: \$10,100



TLC

Teachers in the Limelight Celebration

“My passion is for the kids. I love seeing them get excited when they learn something new. Every year is different. It is why I spend so much time planning lessons. It is why I’ve dedicated my life to teaching for over 32 years.”

- Thonie Williams, 2017 Elementary Teacher of the Year

TLC (Teachers in the Limelight Celebration) honors the dedicated work of teachers in AISD with campus recognition, a formal dinner, and a monetary award. A TLC teacher possesses integrity and a love for teaching that spills into the classroom. The dinner is underwritten by the **Abilene Teachers Federal Credit Union**, with additional in-kind support from AISD. Monetary awards are funded by an endowment established by **Mr. Edwin Jennings, Jr.**, in honor of his parents Edwin and Agnes Jennings, Sr. as well as additional donations by Mr. Jennings. His desire for this event is to recognize, honor, and award monetary gifts to outstanding teachers in Abilene Independent School District.

2017 Winners from left to right pictured with Mr. Edwin Jennings, Jr. in the middle:

Gretchen Bullock, Ashley West, Thonie Williams, & Karen Cluck

AWARD: \$16,600

EXPENSES: \$8,600



ABILENE TEACHERS
FEDERAL CREDIT UNION



COOL

College Offers Opportunities for Life

“Thank you for helping me and always being there for me. I will never be able to thank you enough. You are like a big sister to me. Thank you for looking out for me on college trips and answering all my questions about college whenever I asked and for listening to all my concerns about college too. Most important, thanks for helping me make my dreams come true.”

-Angelique Perez, AISD graduate and COOL program participant

The COOL (College Offers Opportunities for Life) program places four full-time college advisors in Abilene ISD high schools to assist students, especially those who are first in their families to attend college, with applying for financial aid, completing college applications, accessing scholarships, touring college campuses, among a myriad of other services. COOL also provides college educational outreach to elementary and middle-school students and even tracks high school graduates through college graduation. To learn more about COOL and read student testimonials, read the COOL Annual Report at www.aaeff.org. The COOL program is primarily funded by the Shelton Family Foundation and the Dian Graves Owen Foundation.

EXPENSES: \$291,400



AEF supports many other programs within AISD including Pass for Success (\$3,000), Art Outreach (partnership with the Grace Museum - \$2,500), Million Word Reader (\$500) and so much more!

“Pass for Success has been a game changer for our program. Not only does it provide us an opportunity to add to our equipment closet, but also gives a chance for one of our students to showcase their skills in a West Texas football environment. We love Pass for Success!”

- Brandon Osborne, AISD Elementary Physical Education Teacher/Coach

WHAT IS YOUR LEGACY?

Endowment Updates

AEF endowments help fund college educations, classroom supplies for new-to-the-profession teachers, and monetary awards, making a difference in the lives of teachers and students in Abilene ISD for generations to come. A permanent record of donors and gifts is maintained by AEF. The Community Foundation of Abilene manages the investments of the donations and contributions to these endowments. The principal gift remains, and the income continues to generate funds for teachers and students in perpetuity.

Martha Kiel Scholarship Endowment (NEW)

The Martha Kiel Scholarship Fund honors long-time beloved art teacher Martha Kiel's legacy by providing a scholarship to a high school student participating in the annual Young Masters Juried Art Exhibition at the Grace Museum. A truly remarkable woman, Martha Kiel has been described as a "master teacher" who "touches children's souls." Kiel earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls in 1953, achieved an elementary education teaching certificate from Hardin-Simmons University, and a Master of Education degree from Abilene Christian University. Instructing approximately 17,000 students in her 34-year AISD teaching career, Kiel taught at Jefferson Junior High and Cooper High School, while serving as an adjunct professor at McMurry University. At Hardin-Simmons University she served as an adjunct professor from 1974-2013 and was head of the art department from 2000-2006 prior to retirement. While at Cooper she began the Advanced Placement classes for the visual arts and started the Visual Arts Scholastic Event for Region 14. Kiel demonstrated her passion to promote art programs for all students by connecting, mentoring, and inspiring all students regardless of their background.

The Martha Scott Carlson Endowment for AEF GIFT Grants

Martha was a sweet, gracious lady who continuously carried a joy for friends and family and a love for education. She was regarded as a wonderful friend, cherishing and helping those around her wherever she lived. While in Abilene, she donated funds to AEF to begin the GIFT (Giving Incentives to First-time Teachers) Grant program. She provided donations through AEF to have a security officer present at the AISD School Board meetings and funded needs in the deaf education classroom at Ward Elementary. In her memory, her family established an endowment held at Community Foundation of Abilene, to continue to support the GIFT Grant program each year with funds to help first-year, new-to-the-profession teachers outfit their classrooms. What an amazing tribute and honor given in memory of this former teacher and truly generous individual!

Edwin and Agnes Jennings Teaching Excellence Award Endowment

With the donation of 3,000 shares of Exxon Mobile stock from Mr. Edwin Jennings, Jr. a permanent endowment has been established to honor teachers making a difference in the lives of students in Abilene ISD with an annual *Edwin and Agnes Jennings Teaching Excellence Award* in memory of his parents. This endowment will allow AEF to continue these awards yearly for generations to come, as part of TLC (Teachers in the Limelight Celebration). Because of his passion for math and science, Mr. Jennings also chooses to honor a secondary math and science teacher with an *Edwin and Agnes Jennings Teaching Excellence Award* each year. Nominations for these awards are made by students, parents, colleagues, and community members, as well as school administrators. Mr. Jennings, Jr.'s parents, Edwin and Agnes Jennings, were active and well-regarded members of the Abilene community. For more information on TLC please read page 8.

WHAT IS YOUR LEGACY?

Endowment Updates

AHS & CHS Alumni Endowment Funds

In 2009, former Abilene High School and Cooper High School alumni helped establish the groundwork for two additional endowments to provide scholarships for AHS and CHS graduates. Additional funds for the endowments were raised by our first annual Cajun Festival fundraiser. Abilene Education Foundation is working with donors and class reunions to increase these endowments so that scholarships can be awarded every year to Cooper and Abilene High graduates.

AHS: Due to generous contributions from the classes of 1940, 1942, 1943, 1948, 1953, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1979, 1993, 1995, 1996 and 2002 and funds raised by the Abilene Education Foundation Cajun Festival event, the AHS endowment is currently providing an AHS graduating senior with an annual scholarship.

CHS: Due to generous contributions from classes of 1964, 1965, 1967, 1969, 1976, 1978, 1979, 1988 and 1996 and funds raised by the Abilene Education Foundation Cajun Festival event, the CHS endowment is currently providing a CHS graduating senior with an annual scholarship.

The Royce Curtis Excellence in Education Endowed Scholarship Fund

During its 20th class reunion, the Class of 1993 announced, to a very surprised Royce Curtis, the scholarship fund which will help future Eagles reach their goals of a college education. Royce served as the AISD associate superintendent of personnel for seven years, before retiring in 2010. Many students from the Class of 1993 had Mr. Curtis as a principal beginning in the sixth grade at Franklin Middle School and graduated under his administration from Abilene High School, where he served as principal from 1989 until 2003. Mr. Curtis personified the Eagle spirit and had a passion for seeing his students succeed. This fund, which was established by Dr. Bracken and Mrs. Joana Kolle, honors his legacy at Abilene High by awarding a deserving college-bound senior with a scholarship.

Julia Jones Matthews Endowment

In 2005, Julia Jones Matthews established an endowment benefitting Abilene Education Foundation. The corpus of that endowment is owned and managed by the Community Foundation of Abilene. Mrs. Matthews forever changed the landscape of Abilene. Over a lifetime of anonymous philanthropy, she rendered a tour de force for her hometown, quietly, exquisitely, selflessly. Her gracious spirit and her generous heart worked powerful and positive changes among legions throughout this community and beyond. She was the quintessence of the scriptural verse “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Interest earned helps with AEF’s operational expenses.

Abilene Education Foundation Endowment

The Abilene Education Foundation has established a second endowment fund. This endowment, initially began with generous contributions from Lee and Ruth Caldwell, supports AEF programs. The Board of Directors for AEF continues to focus on growth of the organization’s endowment through its annual fund and corporate drive efforts.

Legacy Donors

Legacy Donors choose to include AEF in their estate planning, leaving a legacy of education for future AISD students. AEF legacy donors include Mike Dudley, Mindy Morris, Anonymous (COOL Program), Anonymous (AEF), and the Kolle Family.

ABILENE GOES CAJUN

Our annual AEF Cajun Festival fundraiser last year was a roaring success. It was a fun-filled day highlighting the many talented performing groups of AISD. Thank you again to everyone who helped sponsor this event, especially our presenting sponsors STAR-DODGE and H-E-B. In 2017, we added a private dinner on Friday night for our sponsors only. We had a live band and showed a video(enclosed at the back of this report)thanking everyone for their continued support. In a tight economic climate, we are proud to receive such an outpouring of support at our annual fundraising event from corporate sponsors, AISD staff and educators, individual citizens, retired teachers and more. Last year we raised **\$48,000!** It is because of YOU that AEF is able to give these funds back to support our schools, our children, and our teachers.

We hope you will join us again next year on April 14th at the Taylor County Fairgrounds. We will kick off the day with our annual Crawfish Crawl - 5K run or walk, followed by a day of eating shrimp and crawfish, shopping, an inflatable park for kids, live music, food trucks and more.



“AEF’s Cajun Festival was once again a successful event. We served over 1,700 pounds of Crawfish and netted \$48,000. Thank you to all those that helped to make this a successful event. We will see you in 2018.”

-Jason Darby, Cajun Fest Chair and 2017 AEF President

ABILENE GOES CAJUN



ANNUAL DONORS

Donation levels are from August 1, 2016 until July 31, 2017

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Bass
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Charles Craig
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Landrum
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 AHS Class Of 1959 Reunion

Class of 1960
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Class of 1963
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 Lorelei Stowe Tuckness

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Class of 1979
 AHS Class of 1979 Reunion

Class of 1993
 Anonymous

Class of 1995
 Jennifer Jordan*

Class of 1996
 Christine Curtis-Carr*

Class of 2002
 Amanda Wiskow (Hothan)*
 Kaneshia Francis*

COOPER HIGH SCHOOL

Class of 1964
 Rodney Ewing
 Helga Fuchs
 Mike Latimer

Class of 1965
 Giner Humphreys
 Jeannie & Charlie Jowers

Class of 1967
 Barbara Gee Gandy

Class of 1969
 Cathy Clay
 Mary Armstrong Gee
 Robert S.Gee
 Martha Weatherby - In honor of CHS Class Reunion
 Class Reunion Cooper High School - In memory of Rudene Dunn, Mary Ellen Howell, Kay Cross, Randy Eaton, and Linda Landers

Class of 1976
 CHS Class Of 1976 Reunion

Class of 1978
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 Cathy Brown & Scott Bedford - In memory of Diane Denkhoff
 Janet Estes Garrison
 Shelly & James Hughes
 Melody Martin
 Robin & Robert Rice
 Rose Roberts
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Class of 1979
 CHS Class of 1979 Reunion

Class of 1988
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