

MUEF Grants Help Provide Outside-of-the-Box Programming

By *Melissa Orff*
Staff Reporter

Students in the Mendon Upton Regional School District will be benefitting from some “outside-of-the-box” programming this year thanks to grants provided by the Mendon Upton Education Foundation (MUEF).

MUEF, a non-profit organization, raises money to fund “creative, innovative, and sustainable” educational programs for all four schools in the district. Teachers apply for the grants, which are reviewed and awarded by a committee based on meeting the grant criteria.

Since 2005, MUEF has distributed close to \$240,000 in

grants to fund programs that were outside of the district’s operational budget.

“We don’t just fund supply requests,” said Kathleen Moeckel, President of MUEF. “The grants are a vehicle to help our schools reimagine education and learning. It’s a way to encourage teachers to engage their student’s passions and excitement.”

She noted the dozens of grants have been “transformative” for students, saying, “The programs allow teachers and students to ‘think outside of the box’. In this day and age, that’s what colleges want, that’s what employers want.”

Grant winners for 2018/19 are:

- Kati Dunton from Memorial Elementary School, \$2,069 to purchase Blue-Bot Programming for Kindergarten and 1st Grade. Blue-Bot engages students with programming and coding through the use of blue-tooth-enabled robots, emphasizing computational thinking skills, algorithms and innovative design.
- Steve DellaRovere from Nipmuc Regional High School, \$1,500 to purchase a Fitness Through Technology program and app for students and staff in grades 7-12. A web-based fitness training program, Fitness Through Technology delivers and coordinates custom workouts that meets individual needs by accounting for students’ backgrounds and experiences.
- Matt Merten from Nipmuc, \$2,500 for a pilot of an Interest, Inquiry and Innovations in Learning (i3)

program for juniors and seniors. This grant will support Nipmuc’s i3 interdisciplinary course, providing students opportunities to explore connections between English, history, science, the arts and technology.

- Leigh-Anne Evans, Allison White, and Leah Hagen from Memorial, \$6,000 to purchase Google Expeditions for grade 4. Google Expeditions will take students on immersive, virtual journeys to learning environments around the world, through virtual reality viewers.
- Britt Kahler and Jen Parent from Miscoe Hill School, \$1,174 for digital microscopes to build upon the STEM curriculum and encourage hands-on inquiry-based learning for the seventh grade science classes by allowing for the design of additional programming.

In order to provide these annual grants, a lot of work goes into MUEF’s fundraising efforts, said Moeckel.

One of their major fundraisers will be Sunday, October 28 with the 3rd annual Spooky 5k Run at Nipmuc beginning at 10 a.m. Early registration is \$25 and \$15 for students 18 and under. Race day registration is \$30. The Junior Goblin race for children 10 and under starts at 9:30 a.m. Registration is \$10 per child. All runners who register before October 10 receive a free t-shirt. Prizes will be awarded to the top three male and female finishers in each age division, and for the best individual and group costumes.

For more MUEF information, or to register for the Spooky 5kRun, visit MUEF.org.