

AURORA EAST EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

2023-24 Annual Report



Building Better Communities

Starts with Outstanding Schools.

Be Part of Helping the Aurora East Schools be Great!



2023-24 Annual Report

Board of Director's Message

Dear Friends,

The purpose of the Aurora East Educational Foundation (AEEF) is to provide enrichment programs and educational opportunities for students in Aurora East Schools, District 131. To that end, the Foundation provided opportunities through its Mini-Grant program, Tom-A-Hawk Turkey Trot, Annual Giving Program and, of course, scholarships through the Excellence in Education Endowment, Careers in Education Endowment and Career and Technical Education programs. In all, AEEF programs have enriched the educational experience for all students in District 131.

In 2023, the AEEF transitioned to an on-line registration program for the golf outing, raised more scholarships and revived the Razzle Dazzle Faculty/Staff talent show, and improved communications with District 131.

For 2024, the AEEF will be focusing on improving communication in the scholarship program and working collaboratively with the district to fund a Media and Production position within the district. In addition, the AEEF Board will be taking steps to formalize the Careers in Technical Education (CTE) program. As always, we are looking for input from the community and support from volunteers. See page eight about how you too can be an AEEF volunteer.

On behalf our the AEEF Board of Directors, District 131, and the students at Aurora East School District 131, we thank you for partnering with us to enhance educational opportunities for all students.



Ken Darby, President
Michael McCue, Vice President
Mark Michelin, Treasurer
Carol Reiseck, Secretary
Jennifer Norrell, Ex Officio

Ray Torres
Darnell Gibson
Theresa Shoemaker
Kate Mesiacos

Saul Olivas
Pete Gonzalez
Melissa Mercado
Lisa Morales, Ex Officio



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2023 Golf Outing



Generally, the Golf Outing provides the funds for the Annual Mini-Grant program. We are happy to report that with the help and support of our Tomcat Community we were able to provide for the Mini-Grants as well as three scholarships. Those scholarships were provided by Organic Life, Advocate Construction and our very own Annette Johnson, President of the D131 School Board. The 2023 Golf Outing team included Ronda Mont, Ray Torres, Michael McCue, Ken Darby, Josie Gehler, Mark Michelini, and several others. The 2023 outing grossed \$37,833 and netted \$23,895.

The AEEF has hosted a golf outing, twenty-two years in all. For over those last 22 years, there has been one common thread, Rhonda Mont. Rhonda has had a vital role in each outing, and we cannot thank her enough. We were glad she attended this last year, and hopefully she will continue into the future. If you get a chance, please thank Rhonda for all she has contributed to the success of the AEEF.

Registration and other information for the 2024 Golf Outing can be found at <https://aeefgolf131.com>.

AURORA EAST EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

Golf Outing Financial History

For Fiscal Years 2016 through 2022

Year	Notes	Net Proceeds
2023		\$ 23,895.00
2022		23,408.00
2021		23,074.00
2020	COVID Cancellation	-
2019		21,849.00
2018		17,421.00
2017		25,505.00
2016		10,996.00

2023 Mini-Grants

The Aurora East Educational Foundation awarded 19 Mini-Grants for a total of \$25,096.58. The grant funds were used for books, support for the Special Olympic E-Sports program, traveling musical keypads for the elementary schools, flexible seating, a “Leap Year” musical, SEL Science field trip, attendance at a Percussive Arts convention, supplies for the Life Skills program, certification for students in the Drone program, and equipment to be used to support the Aurora Nostalgia project. These expenditures were used to enhance the educational experience of over 8,000 students, which represents two out of every three students in District 131.

Thank you to Mini-Grant Chair Michael McCue, Darnell Gibson, Kate Mesiacos, Carol Reiseck and Mark Michelini who reviewed all grant requests and nominated the best projects to move forward.



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Aurora East Educational Foundation

2023 Mini-Grant Awards

School	Students	Grant
Allen Elementary School	5,601	2,997.24
Bardwell Elementary School	637	2,988.89
Benavides STEAM Academy	320	1,280.00
Brady Elementary School	266	750.00
Cowherd Middle School	81	2,980.46
East Aurora High School	106	6,500.00
Fred Rodgers Magnet	100	200.00
Hermes Elementary School	226	2,900.00
O'Donnell Elementary School	150	1,500.00
Rollins Elementary School	500	1,500.00
Waldo Middle School	30	1,500.00
Grand Total	8,017	25,096.59

2023 Tom-A-Hawk Turkey Trot



The 3rd Annual Tom-A-Hawk Turkey Trot was an enormous success having a record number 1053 registrants from seven states and from seventy-eight cities in Illinois. The net profit for the 2023 Turkey Trot was \$21,402.79!

The Tom-A-Hawk Turkey Trot is a collaboration between the A+ Foundation of West Aurora and Aurora East Educational Foundation boards, the entire Aurora area community and the endless dedication of the Tom-A-Hawk Turkey Trot committee comprised of

Shane R Gillespie - Educator & Coach at East / Turkey Trot Chairman, Erica Kegarise - VP at West, Michael Nelson - City of Aurora, Ingrid Roney - A+ and Bill Deligiannis – AEEF.

Over the last three years this dedicated group has raised \$53,826.99 to support the enrichment of the East Aurora experience. We look forward to expanding the Tom-A-Hawk program in the future.





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2023 Giving Tuesday

The AEEF is so fortunate to have so many wonderful supporters of our scholarship program. Those folks who have contributed to the scholarship program include parents, alumni, former teachers, school vendors and other Aurora Area Businesses. This year there were over sixty scholarship donors, thirty-six were for a full \$1,000 scholarship.

Our goal with the new Scholarship Committee is to better communicate with the donors as well as with students who have been awarded scholarships. To that end, it is important to note that the AEEF scholarship program is administered by the Community Foundation of the Fox River Valley (CFFRV). The CFFRV scholarship program complies the the criterion established by the Internal Revenue Service.

The AEEF has two scholarship endowments, the Excellence in Education Endowment, Careers in Education Endowment, the AEEF awards two types of scholarships. One for Academic Excellence and the other for students pursuing careers in Education. Currently, the Board is researching establishing three new endowments; (1) a needs-based scholarship; (2) careers in technical education; and (3) an athletic scholarship endowment.

In addition to these scholarship donors, the AEEF also received donations that represented partial scholarships that were rolled into an “other scholarship contributions” which represents a single scholarship. Those donors were as follows; John Fester, Theresa Shoemaker, Greg and Julie Ann Thomas, Alisa Lancaster, Susan Taylor, Henderson-Weir Agency, Mark & Pam Truemper, Gary Smith & Jenny Llanes, Lois Freiheit, Diane Thomas, Tim and Carolyn Hopkins, Dr. Wayne Witten, Lou Hernandez, John Roesch, Kimberly Harris, Esq., Sid & Carol Simmons, Shannon Hassler, Robert & Dorothy Gatenby, Laurie Krueger, Margaret & Gary Engberg Mary O’Conner, Mary Ann Harkness, Sandy Kelly, Jean & Michael McKee, Mike Kelly, and Mary & Charles Parks.

East Aurora Educational Foundation		
2024 Scholarships		
Scholarship Contributions over \$1,000		
Annual Scholarships		
<u>Organization</u>	<u>Donor / Sponsor</u>	<u>Type</u>
Organic Life	Golf Outing - Gold Sponsor	Academic Excellence
Advocate Construction	Golf Outing - Gold Sponsor	Academic Excellence
Annette Johnson	Golf Outing - Gold Sponsor	Academic Excellence
In memory of Terry Shoup	Susan Cooper	Future Educators
In memory of Terry Shoup	Susan Cooper	Academic Excellence
Class of 1983	Dawn Kaine, Class of '83	Future Educators
Lou Hernandez American Family Agency	Lou Hernandez	Academic Excellence
In memory of Cam Leadbetter	Dan Platt / Platt Electric	Academic Excellence
In memory of Thomas Strong, Sr	Tom and Anne Strong	Future Educators
In memory of Frances Heimsath Strong	Tom and Anne Strong	Future Educators
In memory of Genevieve Kennedy	Merry Carey	Future Educators
In recognition of D131 Excellence	Mark & Deb Michelini	Academic Excellence
Dr. John Struck	Dr. John Struck	Future Educators
Other Scholarship Contributions	Various	Academic Excellence
Other Scholarship Contributions	Various	Academic Excellence
In Memory of Nancy Carmody	Patrick & Michael Carmody	Academic Excellence
Cynthia and Michael Reiseck	Carol & Rick Reiseck	Academic Excellence
In Memory of Randy McCue	Bobby, Mary, Ron, Michael & McCue	Academic Excellence
In memory of Del Dufraim	Diana Dufraim	Future Educators
The Cruz Family Scholarship	Rich and Marge Fazio	Academic Excellence
Rich and Marge Fazio	Rich and Marge Fazio	Academic Excellence
In Memory of Lalo and Efigenia Cruz	Rich and Marge Fazio	Future Educators
The Fazio Family Scholarship	Rich and Marge Fazio	Academic Excellence
Arlene and Dick Hawks	Arlene and Dick Hawks	Academic Excellence
Dick Schindel	Dick Schindel	Academic Excellence
Dedicated to Patricia Readey Kenton	Bill Park & Ken Sanjeske	Academic Excellence
Re-occurring Scholarships		
Four Year Scholarship	Carol Thompson	AEEF Scholarship Fund
Four Year Scholarship	Carol Thompson	AEEF Scholarship Fund
Four Year Scholarship	Carol Thompson	AEEF Scholarship Fund
CTE Awards		
In memory of Mario and Shirely Fazio	Rich and Marge Fazio	CTE Award
Enrichment of the Educational Process	Juvenile Protective Association	CTE Award
In memory of William McCormack	John & Janet Avendano	CTE Award
In memory of Chris and Diamanto Mesiacos	Kate and Ted Mesiacos	CTE Award
KCT Awards	KCT Credit Union	CTE Award
KCT Awards	KCT Credit Union	CTE Award

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2024 Scholarships Awarded

It was another stellar year for our Scholarship program. The AEEF was able to award fourteen scholarships for Academic Excellence, six for students seeking careers in Education and one four-year scholarship. New for 2024 is the AEEF is attempting to match students with donors.

Scholarship	Sponsor	Student	College	Major
Academic Excellence				
Organic Life	Organic Life	Avila Damien	WCC	Psychology
Advocate Construction	Advocate Construction	Camacho Evelyn	Undecided	Undecided
Annette Johnson	Annette Johnson	Campos Raymundo	Undecided	Computer Science
In memory of Terry Shoup	Susan Cooper	Fonseca Miguel Ramos	Undecided	Physics
In memory of Cam Leadbetter	Dan Platt / Platt Electric	Hernandez Saidy	Undecided	Undecided
Cynthia and Michael Reiseck	Carol & Rick Reiseck	Hernandez Mariah	Aurora University	Nursing
In Memory of Randy McCue	Bobby, Ron, Michael & McCue	Herrejon Brittany	Undecided	Health Science & Research
The Cruz Family Scholarship	Rich and Marge Fazio	Lopez Karina	Undecided	Social Work
Rich and Marge Fazio	Rich and Marge Fazio	Martinez Angelica	Undecided	Undecided
The Fazio Family Scholarhsip	Rich and Marge Fazio	Nevarez Roman	Lewis University	Undecided
Dick Schindel	Dick Schindel	Novoa Aylin	Aurora University	Graphic Design
Dedicated to Patricia Readey Kenton	Bill Parks & Ken Sanjeske	Rios Biray	Aurora University	Healthcare Administration
In recognition of D131 Excellence	Mark & Deb Michelini	Terrazas Krystal	WCC	Kinesiology & Exercise Science
Partial Scholarship Donations	Various	Vega Iris	U of I - Chicago	Psychology
Arlene and Dick Hawks	Arlene and Dick Hawks	Rolled Over Into 2025		
John & Janet Avendano	John & Janet Avendano	Rolled Over Into 2025		
Careers in Education				
In memory of Terry Shoup	Susan Cooper	Campos Daniel	Aurora University	History
In memory of Thomas Strong, Sr	Tom and Anne Strong	Guerrero Eddie	NIU	History/Educaiton
In memory of Frances Heimsath Strong	Tom and Anne Strong	Gonzalez Mia	Aurora University	Elementary Education
In memory of Genevieve Kennedy	Merry Carey	Espinosa Alexandra	Aurora University	Elementary Education
Dr. John Struck	Dr. John Struck	Jimenez Lizbeth	Aurora University	Elementary Education
In Memory of Lalo and Efigenia Cruz	Rich and Marge Fazio	Rodriguez Kimberly	Undecided	Art Education
Class of 1983	Dawn Kaine, Class of '83	Rolled Over Into 2025		
Re-occurring Scholarships				
East Aurora to College Scholarship	Carol Thompson	'24 Martinez Daisy	Undecided	Nursing
East Aurora to College Scholarship	Carol Thompson	'21 Callinan Abigail		
East Aurora to College Scholarship	Carol Thompson	'23 Espinoza-Villa Jocelyn		

AEEF Scholarship Success Stories

Eddie Guerrero



Eddie Guerrero is an AEEF Scholarship Success Story. In May of 2024, Eddie received his 3rd AEEF Careers in Education Scholarship. Eddie's dream job would be to come back to East Aurora and teach history, specifically Mexican history and how it is has affected American culture. Eddie credits his success to his parents and the many teachers who helped guide him along the way.

Eileen Castelo is a first-year student at the University of Illinois - Chicago and an AEEF Scholarship Success Story. Eileen is studying Accounting and Finance and hopes to become a state senator, driven by her dream to champion improved education opportunities for underserved communities. Eileen is blessed to have supportive parents and family members who have helped her transition into college.



Eileen Castelo



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2024 Razzle Dazzle Talent Show

After a four-year absence, the faculty and staff talent show, Razzle Dazzle was back, and the turnout was a huge success. The show opened with the student Dance team from Rollins Elementary School. The faculty and staff were well represented with teams from six schools and two from the administration center. The “winner” of the Razzle Dazzle competition was the faculty and staff



team from Rollins Elementary School which did a recreation of this year’s SuperBowl half time show. The real winners were the over 1,500 staff, families and community members who attended this year’s wonderful event. Kudos go out to Lisa Morales for directing the event and the emcee, Arlene Hawks. Proceeds of this event benefit the AEEF Mini Grants and student scholarships.

Note from Superintendent Norrell

The AEEF plays an important role in supporting and enhancing District 131 educational opportunities. The mini-grant program is made available to staff in all 21 District 131 schools. Especially helpful is the support provided to the special education program and all mini grant requests for the program were funded this cycle.

Of course, the greatest impact that the AEEF provides is the Scholarship Program. There were over thirty scholarships awarded in 2024, totaling over \$60,000.

Going forward, we are excited about the continued partnership, this includes additional opportunities to support AEEF programs and funding for East High Students. In addition, we hope to collaborate with the AEEF on partial funding of a media specialist position that will enhance the public face of both the District and the AEEF.

Dr. Jennifer Norrell





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How can YOU join the Aurora East Educational Foundation:

The AEEF is a board of volunteers, retired teachers, alumni and interested others from the Aurora Community. Every year, three board members retire and three new volunteers are added to our committee. The requirements for becoming a board member are easy, you simply need a “connection to District 131.” That includes parents!

The commitment to become a AEEF Board member is attendance at every board meeting, working, or playing in the golf outing, working, or running in the Turkey Trot, attending, or working the giving Tuesday program and attending either the Razzle Dazzle or Honor’s nights at East Aurora High School. In addition, you will be asked to join a committee; nominations, scholarships, golf outing, Turkey Trot or Giving Tuesday. Please contact any Board member listed above to get involved.

Meet our newest Board Members:

Kate Mesiacos moved to Aurora in 2004 after marrying her husband, Aurora native and Class of ’87 Tomcat, Alderman Ted Mesiacos. With a degree in Elementary Education, she began her teaching career at East Aurora School District 131’s John W. Gates Elementary School in 2009 as a Bilingual Reading Interventionist and then a Bilingual Kindergarten Teacher.



After teaching for several years, she paused her career in the classroom to focus on motherhood. During that time, she and her husband have been raising two wonderful children together. When she is not running the children to school, sports, piano, or Greek school she is volunteering with several local non-profit organizations including Aurora Area Interfaith Food Pantry, where she serves on the Advisory Board, and of course the Aurora East Educational Foundation (AEEF).



Saul Olivas is an alumnus and former employee of District 131. He discovered his passion for teaching and is currently an elementary dual language teacher at Oswego School District 308. Beyond his teaching duties, Saul actively participates in various community programs. He serves as the Advisory Board President for the Dominican Literacy Center, Vice President 2 for the Citizen Police Academy Alumni of Aurora and has held the position of Vice Chairman for the Aurora Democrats. Additionally, he has been a board member of the City of Aurora Hispanic Heritage Advisory Board. Saul is also heavily involved with the Illinois Education Association. The Aurora East Educational Foundation is very fortunate to have Saul on our team!

Pete Gonzales: Pete grew up on the Eastside and has a tremendous amount of friends and relatives in Aurora. After graduation, Pete attended the University of Notre Dame. After receiving his law degree, he worked in the private sector, but now is employed by Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias as a senior legal advisor. While working for the Cook County States Attorney, we see that Pete was a “Felony Room Special Assistant,” so we are sure Pete will keep us on the straight and narrow.

