

Munster Education Foundation

ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2022



Message from the Board of Directors

The MEF Board of Directors was proud to continue our support for the students and staff of the School Town of Munster as they were welcomed back to school in person for the 2021-2022 school year.

We were thrilled to be able to nearly double our grant-making budget to \$40K to offer students even greater opportunities for innovative and experiential learning across our five schools. MEF events were also back in person this year with the return of our annual Jeans & Jerseys fundraiser as well as a new partnership with the Munster Civic Foundation and the Munster Chamber of Commerce's Light the Night event. It was great to see our community come together again in support of our schools! We would like to extend our gratitude to all of the donors, volunteers, and sponsors who made this year possible!



*2022 Mustang Stout artwork
courtesy of Byway Brewing*

“

MEF board members greatly appreciate all who donate and participate in our activities. Your support helps MEF support the school staff who request funding to enhance their classrooms. All of us together can truly create an engaged community committed to enriching educational opportunities that help our students reach their full potential.”

- Tricia Shelton, Board President



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EXECUTIVE

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Committee Chair: Tricia Shelton, President

Committee Members: Paul Rotatori, Vice President; Lynn Eplawy, Treasurer; Amanda Kilibarda Gutierrez, Secretary; Deb Milne, Past Officer

SUMMARY

The Executive Committee is responsible for creating and informing recommendations for the board; providing oversight of emerging issues, problems and initiatives; planning board meetings; overseeing committees; providing fiduciary oversight; ensuring board member individual responsibilities are being met; representing the board at appropriate functions and continuing to explore a partnership with the Mansueto Foundation for future donations. Each of these responsibilities were upheld by the committee throughout the 2021-2022 school year.

REPORT

The Executive Committee began its work for the 2021-2022 school year with summer meetings focusing on recommendations for committee descriptions and committee heads. A part of this process was also reviewing strategic planning goals, which has not been completed, and assigning those tasks to the appropriate committees. Summer work also included review of budget and making budget recommendations for the finance committee to review prior to September's budget vote. Several officers participated in the on-board training session for new board members, which was coordinated by the Governance Committee. The committee also organized a Board Fellowship Evening at the home of Lynn Eplawy. Different responsibilities and expenses were handled by the committee for the benefit of the group to enjoy time together (along with spouses) and to welcome new board members.

EXECUTIVE

REPORT (CONT.)

During the school year, the Executive Committee met several times to address outstanding business with the Teacher of Merit Award program. After ensuring all final monies had been distributed, we worked to finalized a proposal for a new Mansueto Foundation donation. Once a donation was confirmed and received, we worked with Grants Chair Kristen Smith and Assistant Superintendent Colleen Bergren to develop a plan for the generous donation. Several brainstorming sessions and follow-up conversations with the entire board led to a creative and innovative grant program for the 2022-2023 school year being adopted. Monthly grant opportunities, with the goal of tripling our budget, were announced June 1 to the administrators and teachers of School Town of Munster.

The Executive Committee also provided input to several committees throughout the year. We proposed the 30th Anniversary Event for the summer of 2022, which was adopted by the Event Committee. We also worked with the Governance Committee on updates to the Board Responsibilities document, and we contributed to craft a new Business Sponsorship plan. The committee also reviewed several proposals that were brought to the organization, and all appropriate activities were brought to the entire board for consideration, such as hosting the INAPEF meeting and sponsorship of the South Shore Learning Conference.

The committee represented the organization at the STM School Kick-Off Meeting for staff as well as the Town Board Coordinating Meeting. The committee also hosted the district's new superintendent for dinner on one of his visits prior to beginning his tenure. Several members also represented the organization via the mentor program for the Incubator Lab at Munster High School.

BUSINESS SPONSORSHIPS

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Committee Chair: Mike Jez

Committee Members: Dan Glavin, Candice Kouros, Deb Milne, Tricia Shelton

SUMMARY

The Business Sponsorship Committee was formed in the '21-'22 school year. Its goal is to continue to steward the existing relationships that MEF has with local businesses as well as develop a formal effort to cultivate new relationships.

REPORT

Under the category of Business Sponsorships, MEF received 23 donations for a total of \$19,550.00. We added four new business sponsorships during the same period. Our largest donors are People's Bank, First Merchants Bank and Community Hospital. With Candice's help, People's increased their donation from \$5,000 to \$6,000. Similarly, with Deb's efforts, First Merchants doubled their donation to \$2,000. It is important to note that these are the combined efforts of other parts of MEF, such as the Holiday Lights and Jeans & Jerseys events.

For the '22-'23 school year, it is the committee's goal to increase donations by 10% and add an additional three or more business sponsorships.

EVENTS

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Committee Chair: Deb Milne & Candice Logue

Committee Members: Tricia Shelton, Nancy Hamblin, Paul Rotatori, Kate Nierengarten, Kyle Dempsey, Holly Jones, Kristen Smith

SUMMARY

The Events Committee was responsible for three events during the 2021-2022 school year – Holiday Lights, Honor an Educator gift program in December and May and the Jeans & Jerseys Annual Event. The committee also created a sub-committee (Nancy Hamblin, Carol Moore and Kay Rogan) for the 30th Anniversary event to take place Aug. 30, 2022.

REPORT

Holiday Lights

December 2021

Location: Town Hall & Participating Residences Throughout Munster

After deciding to run Holiday Lights for a second year, we partnered with the Munster Civic Foundation and the Munster Chamber of Commerce to provide a kick-off evening for the event that included the lighting of the town tree. We enhanced the experience by increasing the number of homes participating, and we profited from sponsorships as well as the voting process in which community members could vote for favorite houses for a small fee. By hosting a table at the Light the Night kick-off event, we increased awareness of MEF and sold some kits on site. Next year, we hope to increase value on all avenues with additional marking within the schools.

Total revenue: \$7,889.35

Total expense: \$ 851.26

Net: \$7,038.09

EVENTS

REPORT (CONT.)

Jeans & Jerseys

Friday, May 6, 2022

Location: ByWay Brewing in Hammond

After the success of our virtual Jeans & Jerseys event in 2021, broadcast from Byway Brewing, the committee decided to hold this year's event at this venue. Another change was the addition of a beer, Mustang Stout, created specifically for the event. Jeans & Jerseys was very well-received by attendees. Our guests enjoyed the venue space, food, vibe and the extensive assortment of seed baskets! Our partner, Phil Sajn at ByWay Brewing, was also satisfied with the overall experience and has several ideas to enhance future events, potentially with their outdoor tent space, which could accommodate 300+.

Due to COVID, the event date was changed, and the new venue had limited capacity on purpose. Despite these changes, there were excellent outcomes, enabled in particular by the ticket pricing structure. Overall, it was a very successful event and positive community experience.

Total revenue: \$25,121.18

Total expense: \$ 5,549.48.

Net: \$19,571.70

EVENTS

REPORT (CONT.)

Honor an Educator

December 2021 & May 2022

Honor an Educator is a long-standing tradition of providing parents with the opportunity to gift teachers with an appreciation lapel pin. New cards, with an updated design, and a coffee package option were also offered during the spring semester Honor an Educator program. Marketing materials to parents invited them to order their gift through our website. For \$20.00, the parent could request a pin and provide a personalized message to be written out and provided to the teacher along with the label pin. For \$40.00, the parent could purchase the pin, card, bag of coffee from Just Be Coffee and MEF mug. Program expectations were not met, with lower sales during both the winter and spring semester (just over 20 gifts ordered each time) and additional costs incurred with purchase of coffee and mugs. However, the program is not offered as a fundraising event, but rather as an opportunity to provide parents with the opportunity to honor their child's teacher with a meaningful gift.

Total revenue: \$1,203.20

Total expense: \$200.00 for coffee; 484.16 for mugs;
\$159 for pins (in-kind donation by Tricia Shelton)

Net: \$518.84

FINANCE

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Committee Chair: Lynn Eplawy, Treasurer

Committee Members: Dan Glavin, Nancy Hamblin, Michael Jez, Lyn McHie, Tricia Shelton

SUMMARY

The finance committee spent the year focused on three major tasks:

1. Revising and creating new financial policies for the organization
2. Updating our investment policy statement
3. Studying ways in which our investment funds can work within the organization

REPORT

As an outcome of the strategic planning of Munster Education Foundation (MEF) in 2019-2020, the finance committee was tasked with “Making a plan for saved monies” of our organization. The committee has spent the majority of the last 11 months working toward that goal as well as completing the required fiscal oversight of the committee and improving upon financial policies and practices.

In tackling the strategic goal, the committee met monthly and hosted a variety of professionals who could educate and inform our committee of the opportunities and options for our saved monies. These professionals included Terry Quinn (retired banker, and former MEF board member), Cal Belamy (founding member/president of MEF, and business director), David Kwait (Chief Wealth Management Officer at People’s Bank and current wealth manager of MEF funds), Jim Dunne (Vice President and Wealth Management Officer at People’s Bank), Tom Sourlis (Founder, Mortar Net Solutions, and Local philanthropist) and Tom Devine (Vice President and Wealth Management Officers at People’s Bank).

FINANCE

REPORT (CONT.)

Through these meetings, we were able to identify an opportunity and process in which we feel we have a growth plan to save monies and also account for an annual distribution of saved foundation funds, thereby increasing our grant allowances. All of the work done this fiscal year specific to these plans will be presented in the first part of the new fiscal year for study and approval.

While simultaneously meeting with our advisors to understand and outline a plan for these monies, the committee also spent time reviewing and revising our financial policies. These were summarized in a document and were approved at the March 9, 2022, board meeting. These policies outlined rules and processes for the organization's bank accounts, fiscal responsibilities, tax filings and general programming. They were last updated in 2018 and will be renewed and voted upon each year.

In creating the policies, it was determined that the finance committee would review all monthly bank statements and reconciliation reports as an added layer of oversight on the treasurer. This work began in October 2021 and continued monthly throughout the fiscal year.

The committee also met to review its investment policy statement and engaged Jim Dunne and David Kwait at People's Bank to review our previous policies and understand our current financial needs in order to update the IPS. After presenting a plan to the board internally at our May 2022 meeting, Jim Dunne was invited to our June 2022 meeting for a more detailed discussion and board member vote on the updated policy.

As the Treasurer and head of the finance committee, I thank all of the committee members for their time and dedication to the important work we tackled this year, and look forward to continuing our efforts in the new year.

Respectfully submitted, Lynn Eplawy, Treasurer

GOVERNANCE

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Committee Chair: Lyn McHie

Committee Members: Sandy Baker, Carol Moore, Kay Rogan, Ken Wilk

SUMMARY

The Governance Committee began our work in July by conducting a new member orientation in coordination with the Board President and committee chairs. Governance also reviewed the by-laws to see if any updates should be made and established an attendance policy. The committee also collected and reviewed new board member nominations put forth by current directors in the spring. MEF is always searching for qualified new directors from the community who can bring new skills and ideas and are willing to work to achieve MEF goals.

REPORT

Six Governance meetings were held, three via Zoom and three in person: June 21, July 6, July 7, Feb 22, March 21 and May 22. A seventh meeting was held for new director orientation. Thank you to all committee members for their wealth of knowledge and hard work.

The new board member orientation was conducted via zoom July 28, 2021, with a packet of documents distributed electronically. Videos from the executive board were made available for the orientation. All forms and policies were reviewed and discussed.

The Board Member Responsibility, Conflict of Interest, Whistle-blower, and Legal Responsibilities policies were distributed via email. Signing was accomplished by either electronic signature or signed hard copies. The By-Laws and Articles were also distributed to encourage Board familiarity with their content.

GOVERNANCE

REPORT (CONT.)

The Governance Committee began the process of looking into an attendance policy. Using the concept of Best Practices, researching attendance policies in other organization specifically those of foundations, assisted in the development of various drafts before a final one was presented to the Board. The first one was tabled due to lack of time. Several drafts followed. Rather than a standalone policy, it was decided that it should be incorporated into the Board Member Responsibilities document. Finally, the attendance policy was adopted April 13, 2022. Much discussion and many questions arose.

The motion for the Attendance Police stated: Any member of the Board of Directors needs to attend at least 60% of MEF board meetings either in person or virtually within a given year, with consideration given to a member who has a conflict(s) with attending board meetings. The Director with such conflict(s) will communicate those circumstances to both the President of the Board as well as to the Chair of the Governance Committee.

Attendance alone would not be the only factor used to seek a director's resignation. There would be other considerations to understand. The Board Member Responsibility document was reworked to include the new Attendance Policy.

The committee reviewed the list of board members whose terms were to expire as of June 2022. There were five: Dan Glavin, Lyn McHie, Michael Jez, Holly Jones and Kay Rogan. A letter of intent was sent via email to each. Dan Glavin, Michael Jez, Holly Jones, and Kay Rogan chose to fulfill another three-year term. Lyn McHie would not be renewing for another three-year term. Sandy Baker opted to resign, leaving one year left of her three-year term.

GOVERNANCE

REPORT (CONT.)

An explanation here is important. Directors generally serve a three-year term.

The bylaws state that the terms should be balanced in keeping with 1/3, 1/3, and 1/3 formula. Normally as a Director retires before their term is up, the years remaining should be filled as soon as possible. As this was not the case, MEF ended up with an unbalance formula, which needed to be rectified.

Consequently, it was decided to use the two extra seats set aside for emergency use. Four seats were then available. With that in mind, the number of directors for 2025 are 7, 2024 are 6, and 2023 are 9. Thus, the term numbers are rebalanced. Four prospective directors for the MEF Board were submitted to and recommended by the Governance Committee. The following names with sponsors are: Kevin Frazier (Candice Logue), Erin Swinson (Lynn Eplawy), Wendy Bockelmann (Jeni Williams), and Savithri Grant (Amanda Kilibarda Gutierrez). Biographies were submitted by May 1. Those nominees' names were presented to the Board at the May meeting. A second reading of candidates was read at the June meeting. A vote was taken, and all candidates recommended by the Governance Committee were accepted. Each was contacted individually to congratulate them and begin preparation to choose a date for orientation. The new member packet was completed and was given to the new Governance Chair.

Officers for 2022-2023: The committee recommended and presented a slate of Officers at the May meeting: Tricia Shelton, President; Michael Jez, Vice President; Amanda Kilibarda Gutierrez, Secretary; Lynn Eplawy, Treasurer. A second reading of the slate of officers was read in June. A vote was taken, and all candidates were accepted.

Last but not least, coordinating efforts with the Board President and various committee chairs, the Governance Committee began preparations for the new member orientation scheduled to take place in July 2022.

Respectfully submitted, Lyn McHie, Chairperson of the Governance Committee

GRANTS

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Committee Chair: Tricia Shelton, President

Committee Members: Paul Rotatori, Vice President; Lynn Eplawy, Treasurer; Amanda Kilibarda Gutierrez, Secretary; Deb Milne, Past Officer

SUMMARY

The Grant Committee for MEF initiated many new opportunities to expand not only the levels of grants, but also the amount of the grants that may be received. The Board also approved a major increase to the budget of \$40,000 for this school year. This was almost double the amount budgeted in previous years. Our goal was to present more opportunities for creativity across the district for grant submissions.

REPORT

An annual report is a comprehensive report on a company's activities throughout the preceding year. Annual reports are intended to give shareholders and other interested people information about the company's activities and financial performance.

GRANTS

2021-2022 GRANT SPOTLIGHTS



Secret Stories

EADS ELEMENTARY

"The Secret Stories utilizes brain-based, multi-sensory approaches and student motivation to conquer phonics and help our emergent readers progress and close the learning gap in both reading and writing. The highly engaging "secrets" as to why the letters make the sounds they do will get kids up and moving, singing and dancing, while solidifying their mastery of phonics."

- Evelyn Hansen, Reading Specialist



Second Step

WILBUR WRIGHT MIDDLE SCHOOL

"School Town of Munster and WWMS is dedicated to the social emotional well-being of our students. The curriculum of Second Step helps students cope with challenges, create and maintain positive relationships, and succeed both socially and academically. Second Step will help support STM's mission, vision, and strategic plan in supporting our students."

- Trisha Keown, School Social Worker



GRANT SPOTLIGHT

SEL Book Collections

Elliott Elementary

"The Social-Emotional Learning Collections are tailored to each grade level K-5. The resources will be utilized during school-wide Morning Meetings to support the district's SEL goals for our students. Students of all grades love to be read to, and high-quality literature is a great hook to promote meaningful conversations and deep learning."

Amanda Jez, Assistant Principal



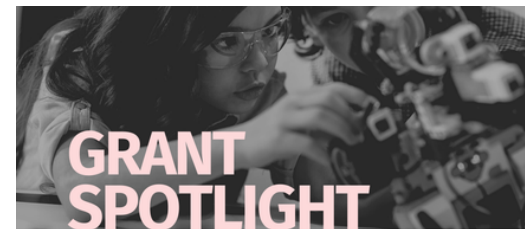
GRANT SPOTLIGHT

IXL Spanish

Wilbur Wright Middle School

Students will be using IXL's personalized, highly-interactive software to practice their language skill and support mastery of content. IXL also provides data on student progress as well as actionable insights for educators on where additional support is needed.

Sarah Barsic, Spanish Teacher



GRANT SPOTLIGHT

Robotics Team

All Elementary Schools

"Through the creative process of designing, building, and programming robots for competition, our students gain a wealth of technical knowledge. They're developing communication and teamwork skills that'll serve them throughout life."

John Blum, Robotics Coach



MARKETING

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Committee Chair: Paul Rotatori

Committee Members: Amanda Kilibarda Gutierrez, Carol Moore, Kristin Sculli, Jeni Williams, and community volunteer Caitlin Renwald

SUMMARY

The Marketing Committee developed several new programs with other MEF committees to broaden our reach to new audiences, including a new sponsorship program and planned/memorial gift programs. MEF also continued to grow its audience via email and social media engagements.

REPORT

The Marketing Committee was responsible for social media, website support, donor database maintenance and external communication of all MEF activities.

The Marketing Committee worked on several new projects this year to expand our reach into different audiences and help support other MEF committees with their new ventures, including:

- A new web page to showcase MEF's new sponsorship program details, including descriptions of the program and a donor wall to highlight sponsors. The Neon business donation form was also updated to match the new structure of the sponsorship program.
- The grants web pages were redesigned to match the new multi-tiered program that MEF began using this year to distribute grants.

MARKETING

REPORT (CONT.)

- Two new programs were created to enable Honor/Memorial gifts and Planned gifts. A new web page and Neon donation forms were created along with a brochure to communicate the program. This year, there was a soft launch of these programs, with a more focused launch to come during the 2022-23 school year.
- A new partnership was formed with Just Be Coffee, and donors were able to send educators a bag of coffee along with their Honor an Educator request.
- The committee developed a logo for MEF's 30th Anniversary.

Press releases were sent out for the Holiday Lights "Light the Night" event to The Northwest Indiana Times, The Post-Tribune and The Lansing Journal and received coverage in The Lansing Journal. We also sent a release regarding the spring grants to The Northwest Indiana Times and The Post-Tribune.

An annual fundraising letter and preview of MEF's upcoming fundraisers was mailed to the approximately 9,800 residents of Munster.

Please see the following email analytics for the last year:

- 10 total emails sent
 - Sent to 1,083 email addresses (up 123 emails from last year)
 - Audience engagement:
 - 35% Often (highly engaged and often open/click within emails)
 - 21% Sometimes (moderately engaged and sometimes open/click within emails)
 - 43% Rarely (not very engaged and rarely open/click within emails)
 - Top and lowest rate of emails opened that weren't emails to event attendees:
 - Highest = Holiday of Lights Wrap-Up (66%)
 - Lowest = 2021 Fall Grants (33%)

MARKETING

REPORT (CONT.)

- Top and lowest rates of clicks on links within emails:
 - Highest = 2022 Honor An Educator And J&J Wrap-Up (6%)
 - Lowest = 2021 Fall Grants (0.5%)

The analytics below are from MEF's Facebook presence over the last year:

- Number of people who like our page = 749 (up 35)
- Total posts = 54 (down 9 posts from previous year)
- Post with the most organic reach (i.e., not boosted) = Holiday Kit purchase post (3,873)
- Post with most engagements = Light the Night Post (594)
- Instagram = 131 followers

INAPEF

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Committee Chair: Nancy Hamblin, Treasurer of INAPEF Board of Directors

SUMMARY

INAPEF (Indiana Association of Public Education Foundations) is a state organization whose mission is to grow and strengthen Indiana's education foundations as philanthropic leaders through education, training, collaboration, and advocacy to enhance public education. Through INAPEF and MEF, the School Town of Munster received \$142,000 worth of Lysol Wipes to help the schools through the extra cleanings needed to keep our students and staff healthy and the facilities clean.

REPORT

INAPEF provides conferences and online trainings as well as regular sharing of ideas and services. MEF has had representatives attend INAPEF's online chats as well as in-person conferences. Munster has hosted local regional meetings in the past. The date is set to host it once again on Sept. 1, 2022. While MEF can share its successes with others, we can learn from them as well. With an opportunity to get some K-12 reading books currently on the table, INAPEF continues to offer valuable tools for this education foundation.

Nancy Hamblin currently serves as the treasurer of INAPEF. Her goal is to get more participation by MEF members.

www.munstereducationfoundation.org

