

2022-2023



Annual Report

Presented By :

Munster Education Foundation

www.munstereducationfoundation.org

About Us

Founded in 1992, Munster Education Foundation (MEF) is a nonprofit organization supporting innovative and experiential learning in the School Town of Munster through partnerships with educators, parents, businesses, and the greater community.



MUNSTER EDUCATION FOUNDATION

supporting *innovative & experiential* learning

Our Mission

The mission of the Munster Education Foundation is to support innovative and/or experiential learning in the School Town of Munster through partnerships with educators, parents, businesses, and the greater community.

Our Vision

Our vision is an engaged community committed to enriching educational opportunities in the School Town of Munster, helping students reach their full potential.

MEF believes in...

1

Expanding educational horizons: Advancing diverse, equitable, and inclusive educational experiences/opportunities for all Munster students.

2

Ethically stewarding our resources: Steering the organization in a transparent, accountable, and ethical way, ensuring the community's trust.

3

Collaborating to support innovation: Creating a culture of respect that seeks inspiration from our community's diverse strengths by being open-minded and flexible.



From Our Board

Munster Education Foundation kicked off the 2022-2023 school year with a celebration of our 30th anniversary.

Thanks to the vision of a few dedicated community members in 1992, MEF was formed as a 501©(3) with the mission of helping to bridge the gap between the realities of the school budget and the creative ideas of our teachers that required outside funding. While board members have changed over the years, we have consistently been a group of volunteer community members who care about the quality of our schools. In August 2022, we celebrated and recognized our founders, our administration and teachers who have brought innovative and experiential learning opportunities to our classrooms, the businesses that have partnered with us over the years, and community members who have supported us through annual donations and attendance at our events.

This celebration cumulated in the announcement of MEF tripling our budget in honor of our 30th anniversary. Thanks to a generous private donation, continued business and community member support, and innovative grant requests, MEF provided nearly \$120,000 in funding for grants this past year.

As we looked back to celebrate the past 30 years, we certainly had many successes from this past year to add to the celebration. A summary of these activities follows. However, we humbly recognize that our successes would not be possible without a community that continues to support our schools, nor would we be making a difference without our administrators and teachers, who continue to request funds for awesome projects, innovative ideas, and wonderful experiential learning for the students of School Town of Munster. We all have much to be proud of!

Tricia Shelton, Board President



A Year in Review



·In honor of Munster Education Foundation's 30th anniversary and thanks to the generous support of the communities we serve, MEF awarded a record amount of grants to Munster schools during the 2022-2023 school year, with \$119,135 in grants distributed. In comparison, in 2021-2022, MEF awarded \$40,525 in grants across our five schools. At the time, this amount nearly doubled MEF's grant-making budget year-over-year.



·For the first time, grants were awarded to Munster educators monthly rather than biannually, increasing opportunities for educators to request grants as needs arose throughout the year. Grants were distributed across all five schools (Munster High School, Wilbur Wright Middle School, Eads Elementary School, Elliott Elementary School, and Frank Hammond Elementary School), with nearly \$38,000 in grant awards benefiting all-elementary-school initiatives such as Project Lead the Way in second and fifth grades and an elementary-wide art project planned for 2024.



Our grants resulted in 14,903 student engagements, defined as the number of students impacted per grant, in a school system of 4,093 students (pre-K through grade 13[JW1]).



MEF's Fund Development Committee created new opportunities for businesses to sponsor MEF events, with platinum (\$6,000), gold (\$2,500), silver (\$1,500), and bronze (\$500) sponsorship opportunities promoted. In total, the committee secured \$19,500 in sponsorship dollars.



MEF's Events Committee raised \$57,000 in revenue through events such as Holiday Lights, Jeans and Jerseys, Honor an Educator, and MEF's 30th anniversary celebration.

Executive Committee

Committee Chair: Tricia Shelton

Committee Members: Tricia Shelton, Mike Jez, Lynn Eplawy, Amanda Kilibarda Gutierrez, and Deb Milne

Summary: The executive committee is composed of the four elected officers as well as a board member who has served in the role of president. The executive committee for the 2022-2023 school year comprised Tricia Shelton, Mike Jez, Lynn Eplawy, Amanda Kilibarda Gutierrez, and Deb Milne. Our primary mission this past year was to secure the organization's financial security as we sought to increase our impact in the school district.

In addition to our weekly responsibilities as officers, the committee met quarterly and maintained communication via email if matters required attention between committee meetings.

Accomplishments of Executive Team during the 2022-2023 school year include:

- Proposing the increased grant budget to coincide with the 30th Anniversary
- Working with the grants committee to establish new grant deadlines and additional categories
- Maintaining communication with the Mansueto Foundation
- Updating committee responsibilities document and selecting the committee heads
- Providing input on the Business Sponsorship program as worked on by Fund Development Committee
- Providing input on the Investment plan as worked on by the Finance Committee
- Representing MEF (and, in some cases, speaking) at community events such as the South Shore Learning Conference, School Town of Munster Staff Welcome Back event, Night Out Against Crime booth, Rotary Club, Munster Chamber of Commerce, School Town of Munster Board Meetings, as well as attending monthly President's Meetings with School Town of Munster administration
- Overseeing a memorial gift for Bob Shinkan and working with the Largus family on the Tom Largus Memorial Donations
- Discussing an INAPEF grant opportunity, with a recommendation to apply for funds to be used for website consulting work

Events Committee

Committee Chair: Deb Milne

Committee Members: Wendy Bockelmann, Savithri Grant, Holly Jones, Candice Logue, Kate Nierengarten, Paul Rotatori, Kristin Sculli, and Tricia Shelton

Summary: The purpose of the Events Committee is to fund raise to support our mission of providing grants to enrich the programs, activities and facilities of the School Town of Munster. Specific functions of the Events Committee can be found in the August 2022 minutes.

This Year's Accomplishments:

- 30th Anniversary Party actual revenue \$5,402
- Holiday Lights actual revenue \$9,267
- Honor an Educator actual revenue \$244
- Jeans & Jerseys actual revenue \$41,963



30th Anniversary Party was a ticketed event to celebrate MEF's 30th birthday that was held at Wicker Park Social Center. We took a walk through MEF's rich history and reconnected with old friends and past board members over food and drink.

Honor an Educator was offered again as a way for parents to make teacher gift giving easier and to recognize a job well done by their favorite teachers. Students and/or parents could submit a handwritten letter to be delivered to their teacher(s) along with our MEF apple pin for a small donation.



Events Committee (Continued)

Holiday Lights was held for the third consecutive year and raised more than \$,3300 through votes alone! This family friendly event began with the annual tree-lighting ceremony at the Munster Town Hall. New this year were rides to view the holiday lights around town. Throughout the month, residents voted for their favorite home, with every vote going toward grants for Munster Schools.



Jeans & Jerseys was wildly successful as we brought the “Brewery Takeover” to ByWay Brewery. With over 350 attendees, Morning Glories Band, food, made for MEF Double Chocolate Export Stout, raffle baskets, 50/50 raffle, custom designed MEF Mustang T-shirts, a good time was had by all!

Finance Committee

Committee Chair: Lynn Eplawy

Committee Members: Dan Glavin, Michael Jez, and Kristen Smith (through Dec 31, 2022)

Summary: The Finance Committee develops and presents all financial goals and proposals to the board of directors for approval.

The Finance Committee began the year by educating all board members with an account review. With new financial policies approved prior to the beginning of the year, and new events scheduled in the fiscal year, the committee produced and presented a budget to all board members.

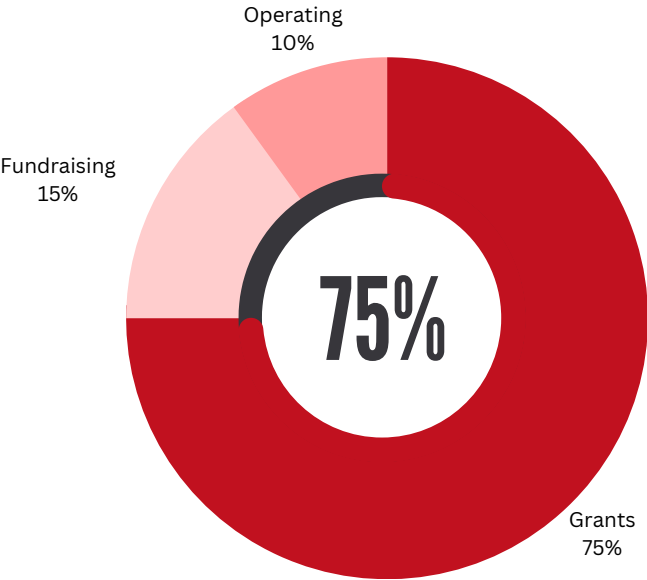
Throughout the year, the committee reviewed all bank statements and account reconciliation reports on a monthly basis as well as worked with our insurance broker to update and review coverages. The committee also reviewed the tax filings for the organization as prepared by McMahon and Associates. Further, the finance committee met biannually with Jim Dunne, Vice President and Wealth Management Officer at People's Bank, to review our investments and their progress in an ever-changing market. We worked with Mr. Dunn on timing of asset transfers as decided at the end of the previous fiscal year.

Lastly, the committee reviewed a variety of fiscal options for establishing a reinvestment strategy and year-end financial decisions that will continue into the early part of the new fiscal year, with the goal of presenting a plan to the board.

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 will work with the new treasurer to ensure a successful transition.

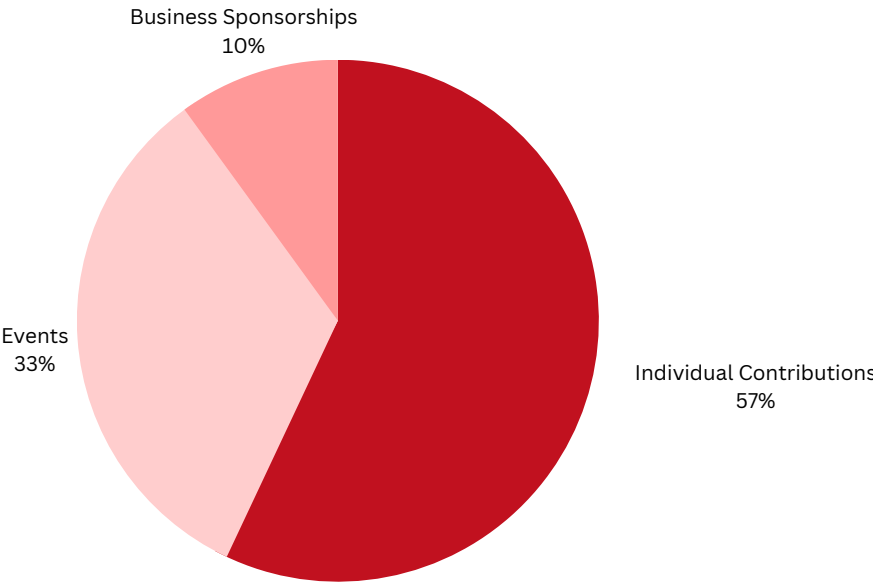
Respectfully submitted by Lynn Eplawy, Treasurer

Finance Committee (Continued)



75% of **expenditures** went directly to funding learning opportunities in Munster schools

MEF would like to thank the individuals, businesses, and foundations that contribute to robust annual **revenue**.



Fund Development Committee

Committee Chair: Mike Jez

Committee Members: Savithri Grant, Nancy Hamblin, Candice Logue, and Tricia Shelton

Summary: The Fund Development Committee is responsible for securing funding outside of MEF events or marketing efforts. The main activity for the committee has been securing business sponsorships. but seeking other sources of revenue, such as through grant opportunities or planned giving, is also under this committee's responsibilities.

The committee's first order of business was to develop sponsorship opportunities to be presented to area businesses. Sponsorship levels and events to be highlighted include:

- **Merry & Bright Holiday Lights:** Decorated homes competition throughout December. Publicity begins in mid-November and runs throughout December. Sponsors are recognized on the family kit maps, and the platinum-level sponsorship received signage as the trolley sponsor for a dedicated event on Dec. 11, 2022. In-kind donations for the family kits were also welcomed.
- **Jeans & Jerseys Annual Event:** Beer-tasting and fellowship event at Byway Brewery on Feb. 3, 2023. Publicity begins end of December. Platinum-level sponsorship received logo on pint glass giveaway for the event. In-kind donations such as gift certificates or products were welcomed for basket raffles.

The committee first approached all Munster Chamber of Commerce members, with the chamber generously providing mailing labels for its membership. A total of 60 letters with sponsorship information pages were mailed in late October. The committee also reached out to key businesses on the list just before Thanksgiving to follow up on the letter and try to secure sponsorship dollars before businesses closed out the calendar year.

The committee also provided formal thank you letters to each business partner and sought logos and appropriate recognition for each company based on their level of participation.

Fund Development (Continued)

SPONSORSHIP LEVELS

	Recognition on MEF website	Recognition in Holiday Lights promotions	Recognition in Jeans & Jerseys promotions	Recognized as sponsor of Holiday trolley and J&J pint glasses
PLATINUM \$6,000	✓	✓	✓	✓
GOLD \$2,500	✓	✓	✓	
SILVER \$1500	✓	✓		
BRONZE \$500	✓			
IN-KIND DONATIONS		Coupons for family kits welcomed	Certificates or basket items welcomed	

In total, the committee secured \$19,500 in sponsorship dollars.

The committee did not have opportunity to further the planned giving program, which was originally designed by the marketing team, and while work was put into seeking appropriate grant applications, none were sought this past year. Both are goals for the committee this upcoming year, in addition to deepening relationships with a few major businesses in the area.

Respectfully submitted by Mike Jez, Fund Development Chair

Governance Committee

Committee Chair: Ken Wilk

Committee Members: Carol Moore and Kay Rogan

Summary: The Governance Committee provides for the board's effectiveness and continuing development.

The Governance Committee had a light agenda this year after spending much time on updating policies the previous two years.

This year's first order of business was participating in the onboarding session held in July 2022 as we welcomed four new board members. Presentation of documents such as Board Member Responsibilities, Code of Conduct, Whistleblower Policy, and the By-Laws were presented and reviewed with the new members.

In the fall, the committee updated the board roster and included each board member's first year in addition to their current term. This will help us see how long some of our members have been involved (for celebratory purposes as we have no term limits) as we also manage board term expirations that need attention each spring.

In December, we received the formal resignations of board members Kyle Dempsey and Kristen Smith, who were both resigning due to their School Town of Munster Board of Trustees positions beginning in January.

Work in the spring included reaching out to board members with expiring terms for option to renew their term or give up their seat. Four members renewed and one member, Amanda Kilibarda Gutierrez, resigned. The committee then distributed Board Member Nomination Forms to the board and recommended four new members be sought by the board.

Governance Committee (Continued)

The committee was then able to present four nominations at the May meeting for vote at the June meeting. The committee also worked on the slate of officers and communicated with a handful of board members with the need to fill positions that would be vacated. The slate of officers was announced at the May meeting, with a vote in June.

Respectfully submitted by Kay Rogan, Committee Member

Grants Committee

Committee Chair: Wendy Bockelmann

Committee Members: Colleen Bergren, Holly Jones, Candice Logue, Kristin Sculli, Erin Swinson, and Jeni Williams

Summary: The goal of the Grants Committee is to fund grants to all five School Town of Munster schools to enhance innovative projects that can make a positive impact on our schools and community. The Committee carefully weighs various factors in deciding which grants to fund. These factors include how many students will be impacted by the grant, the amount of the grant, and whether the grant enhances learning opportunities in a new and fresh way.

During the 2022-2023 school year, the Grants Committee met once a month via Zoom. Prior to the Committee meeting, the Chair would communicate receipt of the grants with the applicants and verify approval of the grants by the school principals.



During the meeting, the Committee members worked well together to formulate questions and have meaningful, respectful discussions regarding the grants. After the Committee meeting, the chair would follow up with the applicants on any questions that arose during the meeting. The Committee would then communicate by email to express their opinions on the new information and form a recommendation for the Board.

At the monthly Board meetings, the Committee Chair presents the grants to the Board, along with the Committee's comments and recommendations on funding. Following the Board's decision, the Committee Chair then communicates the decision to the applicants and facilitates check delivery if applicable. The Chair, along with an Executive board member, would then announce the recipients and award them a pin at a School Board Meeting. This presentation was done on a quarterly basis.

Grants Committee (Continued)

This Year's Accomplishments:

Overall, the Grants Committee had a very successful year, awarding \$105,633.31 in grants as of May 2023, with 13,314 student engagements. This was a record year for grant distribution, with a goal of awarding \$120,000 in grants this school year in honor of our 30th anniversary and due to generous donations.

The Committee has awarded numerous grants for all five schools. One significant grant funded Project Lead the Way within Munster elementary schools, beginning with second- and fifth-grade students. This program will ultimately empower students to choose their own hands-on STEM projects to advance critical-thinking and problem-solving skills. Colleen Bergren, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, anticipates that with continued funding, Project Lead the Way could be expanded to middle school and high school students. She believes this program would be a game changer for our district, setting School Town of Munster apart from other high-performing school districts statewide.

Other grants have included materials for the Learning Lab and new Makerspace at Eads Elementary. We have funded kits for the new Robotics Team and provided drum circles to enhance Social Emotional Learning at Elliott Elementary. We have funded material to enhance the Smekens program as well as a Virtual Reality Headset subscription for Frank Hammond Elementary.

Grants awarded through MEF also have funded circuit playgrounds for the Computer Science classes as well as a Glow Day for the math classes at Wilbur Wright Middle School. We have further funded math manipulatives for the Algebra classes as well as Electronic Balances for the science department at Munster High School. We have provided the above grants and many more!

For the first time this year, the grants were awarded on a monthly basis. The Grants Committee has discussed the pros and cons of this and believes we should move forward with this process for the upcoming school year. Other discussions have been had, such as how to encourage more teachers and staff members to apply for grants. The Grants Chair will work with the Marketing Chair on how to best implement these ideas.

Respectfully submitted by Wendy Bockelmann, Grants Chair

Marketing Committee

Committee Chair: Jeni Williams

Committee Members: Amanda Kilibarda Gutierrez, Kevin Frazier, Carol Moore, Paul Rotatori, and Erin Swinson

Summary: The Marketing Committee promotes the mission and activities of the Munster Education Foundation with the community. In 2022-2023, our committee's goals were to share the impact the foundation has made during its 30-year history by highlighting its extensive contributions to innovative and experiential learning in Munster; ensure a brand-consistent look is applied to all communications and the website; extend the reach of our message through social media and online and print media; support the success of MEF events, including fundraising events; publish an annual mailer; and update the look and messaging on our website.

This Year's Accomplishments:

- The marketing committee commemorated the foundation's 30th anniversary with a new logo, press releases, and a social media campaign wherein we spotlighted a board member on the 30th of each month, which further drew attention to our foundation, its board members, and our impact.
- We published a mailer at the end of October that reached 87% of its fundraising goal, further spreading our message and news about the grants we have awarded, and we supplemented this with an email that highlighted specific grants awarded during the start of our 30th anniversary year. Donations continued to be received into Spring 2023.
- We continued to expand upon efforts to educate teachers and staff about grant opportunities with marketing materials geared toward these educators, and we celebrated teachers and staff of the month by awarding a travel mug decorated with our 30th anniversary logo.
- We explored the type of messaging we should incorporate to encourage donations in a year when we have a surplus of money to distribute thanks to generous contributions.

Marketing Committee (Continued)

- We also began work toward updating specific areas of our website, incorporating the 30th anniversary logo and branded images and strengthening the honor and memorial, grants, and events sections of our website, but also considered ways to make a deeper impact in 2023-2024 in this regard, and Paul Rotatori will spearhead this effort.
- We supported the success of Holiday Lights, which featured new offerings, such as holiday lights party bus rides through town; the Jeans and Jerseys event, which drew record attendance; and Honor an Educator, which recorded 48 sales, with 42 orders received this spring.
- An overall branding exercise remains a goal.
- We also worked to increase photos of grants in action and publicize these to our community, along with regular updates on grant awards distributed and group photos of teachers who received them.
- One of our goals was to increase media mentions regarding MEF. We secured a feature article in Munster Living magazine about our grant program, featuring the impact for the MHS Choir, which received a grant to commission a brand-new work for its trip to Austria, and a 500-word sidebar on the foundation itself. We also secured an article about Holiday Lights in The Lansing Journal and news briefs in The Post-Tribune.
- We sent personalized letters to specific donors (those who donated more than \$50 received a magnet).
- We also supported community and educational events, including the National Night Out on Crime and the Back-to-School Bash for School Town of Munster.

Respectfully submitted by Jeni Williams, Marketing Chair

INAPEF

Commitee Chair: Nancy Hamblin

The Munster Education Foundation (MEF) is a member of the Indiana Association of Public Education Foundations, Inc. (INAPEF).

MEF was represented on the INAPEF Board of Directors and in the INAPEF treasurer's position this past year by Nancy Hamblin.

In September, the Munster Education Foundation, with the support of the School Town of Munster, hosted the regional INAPEF conference. MEF had three members in attendance who learned from and shared with other local and statewide education foundation representatives. The new Munster Superintendent, Brett Heller, visited the meeting.

INAPEF also offered the opportunity to participate in a racial equity program called Groundwater that was funded by the Indianapolis Foundation. Several MEF members participated.

In November, the INAPEF conference was held in Indianapolis. The conference provided opportunities to learn about multiple topics from nonprofit legal counsel to best practice fundraising methods/resources. Networking with other education foundations proved to be a great experience.

INAPEF continues to work with government officials to get Indiana tax credits for education foundations.



INAPEF (Continued)

INAPEF announced in May that the Lilly Endowment Inc. had awarded a grant of \$179,036 to INAPEF for three programs:

- Professional support/staffing and coaching for five volunteer-led members.
- Certificate or a la carte coursework at The Fund Raising School (TFRS), through the Lilly School of Philanthropy at IUPUI, for 14 staff-led members
- TFRS certificate coursework and association management professional development for INAPEF's Association Administrator

This grant is the largest this organization has ever received and undertaken and will impact 30% of the membership. The Munster Education Foundation is currently deciding whether to apply for this grant opportunity.

INAPEF provides strong support for Indiana's Public Education Foundations. It is recommended that we maintain membership with this organization for 2023-2024 and utilize the opportunities it provides.

Respectfully Submitted by Nancy Hamblin, INAPEF Committee Chair



Thank you!

Thank you to the School Town of Munster community for your continued support for MEF's mission.

To learn more about MEF's impact, make a donation, or get involved, visit us on our website or follow us on social media.



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