

# Grant brings new books for young readers to Southington schools



South End Elementary School in Southington, Thursday, Sept. 1, 2022. Dave Zajac, Record-Journal



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SOUTHINGTON — The Southington Education Foundation has been awarded an almost \$43,000 grant from the Main Street Community Foundation to support its Reading With Our Minds and Hearts program in the Southington schools.

The program is a reading initiative that provides a wide selection of books in K-12 libraries in schools across the district. It was kick started to nurture an increased interest in reading, promote appreciation of diversity, and invigorate students' social-emotional well-being.

The funds were provided through the Bradley Henry Barnes & Leila Upson Barnes Memorial Trust.

The trust has sponsored multiple projects in the community, including the recently completed splash pad at Camp Sloper.

Most of the books being purchased are decodable books for K-2nd grade classrooms, which are books that are written for beginner readers — usually containing graphics to create associations between them and the words on the page. There will also be more read-aloud books that can be brought out to community events.

SEF officials purchased a diverse range of books that they felt were more reflective of the diversity seen in the lifestyles, backgrounds, and perspectives of the students of the district.

“These books, they're more reflective of our community. They'll have books that reflect children from different backgrounds, stories that kids can relate to and see themselves in. So it will reflect the science of reading to encourage literacy in children, but it allows them to connect to these books because they'll be able to see themselves, and also, to see people who aren't like them,” said Katie Wade, co-chair of the SEF.

SEF approached the Main Street Community Foundation with their proposal for the grant as part of their emotional wellness initiative, which agreed with their vision for the use of the funds. The grant provides them with one-time use funds, which have already been utilized to purchase a large number of books that will be brought into libraries for the fall semester.

Several of the books were purchased from a list compiled by the district's curriculum director and several literacy coaches so educators will have access to all the books they want for their programming. SEF will be hosting a 'book tasting' for teachers to peruse many different books and pick out which ones they want before the fall.

According to Wade, the teachers they've been collaborating with are enthusiastic about getting an influx of new books, and the opportunities it opens up to their curriculum and bringing in new perspectives to the classroom environment.

It's the hope of the organizers that their purchase will continue to enrich the district for many years to come.

"Our mission is to partner with the district to provide creative and innovative educational opportunities for students. And with the younger grades, like K through two, we felt that this was a great way that it brings new books into the classroom to engage them in reading," said Wade.

District administrators were also excited about the grant and the new books it would provide them, thankful for the SEF's collaboration over the past nine years.

"I think it continues to be a wonderful partnership with the foundation. They're extremely supportive of the district's goals and the vision we have for improving literacy across the grade levels. And the resources they're providing will only further enhance our children's ability to have access to books that are appropriate and interesting for them," said School Superintendent Steve Madancy.

More information about the SEF and its work is available online at <https://southingtoneducationfoundation.org/> (<https://southingtoneducationfoundation.org/>).

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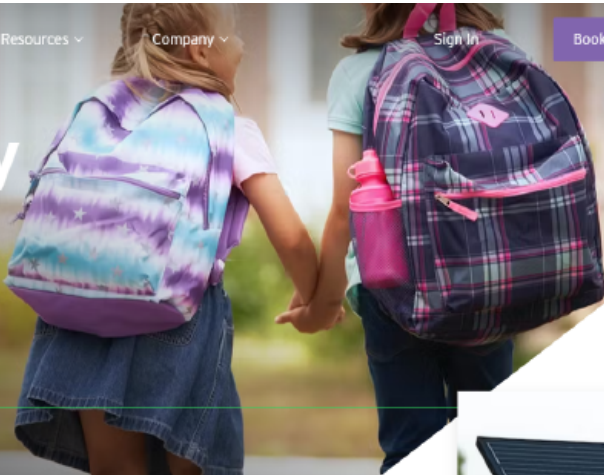


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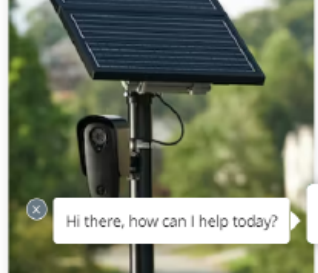
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