Looking back on my almost three years as a member of this board, it’s amazing to see all the outstanding things we’ve been able to accomplish in support of our students. Being in the logistics business, I understand very well that it takes a well-coordinated team to organize and deliver the programs and goods that the foundation delivers on a regular basis, much like a supply chain. There are many facets to our chain: donors, volunteers, district members, teachers, board members, parents, and students just to name a few. All are just as important as the next to make the whole mechanism work.

Josh has done a tremendous job leading this board in his term as our president, and I have some big shoes to fill. Luckily, we have a very active board and one very passionate executive director to guide me as I take the reins. For that I am excited and thankful. I look forward to growing relationships with each piece of our chain as we find new ways to support student achievement!

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At-Home Learning Desks

This school year started out with a bright spot, thanks to the FDPS Judi Chandlee Tribute to Teachers Endowment, which awarded nearly 56,800 to 16 public school teachers. These grants will impact thousands of students in the public schools. The gifts will provide much needed funding for supplies, equipment, and innovative educational experiences throughout the district.

“Our community is so fortunate to have such generous people that are invested in our schools. The Chandlee family values education, and their generosity allows teachers to enhance the quality of education we provide to our students in the Dubuque Community Schools,” shared Anne Murphy, 3rd grade teacher at Eisenhower Elementary.

Murphy stated, “With all the uncertainty in the world, I felt called to do my part as an educator. The funds from the Judi Chandlee Tribute to Teachers grant will be used to expand our Eisenhower book room with diverse children’s literature. This will allow teachers to access enriching material that will help support age-appropriate conversations with our students in a safe and nurturing environment.”

The grants are funded by the family and friends of Judi Chandlee, a beloved Eisenhower Elementary teacher, who passed away in 2011.

As at-home learning surged during the pandemic, community members realized that many kids didn’t have desks at home. For some families they noticed their children kept taking over the kitchen table for their remote lessons. The FDPS was approached by a community member that wanted to make a difference. The desks he has made are kid-size, simple and inexpensive, fashioned from plywood with a hutch for workbooks and papers, but they do the trick. FDPS and the DCSD will work together to identify students that would benefit from an at-home learning desk, and work with community members and businesses to make that a reality. If you are interested in learning more on how you could give of your time and talents or financially, please contact Amy Unmacht at amyu@dbqfoundation.org or 563-588-2700.

Project Based Learning

We were able to sell the "Tiny House" that was completed by students at the Alternative Learning Center along with help from contractors in the Dubuque Community. Proceeds from the sale of the Tiny House will allow for future projects that offer in-depth, career-building experiences in the construction trades.

COVID-19 Response

The Foundation for Dubuque Public Schools utilized a grant from the Disaster Recovery Fund to provide a thermometer for all 6,300 families in the Dubuque Community School District. This helped the Dubuque Community School District with their return-to-learn plan and supported staff and students to return to buildings in August.

Additionally, the FDPS has received funding from the Morgridge Family Foundation to support Student Support Foundations (SFF) at both Hempstead and Dubuque Senior. At its core, the mission of SSF is simple: to empower and inspire the next generation of great American philanthropists. At the highest level, this vision is realized by providing a group of students $4,000 and asking them to give it away with thoughtfulness, compassion, collaboration, and imagination. We invite our SSF club members to become a part of something bigger than themselves: a movement grounded in helping others in their school community. Students meet monthly to learn more about philanthropy and non-profits in the Dubuque area. They also review applications for grants and hold discussions on how these funds will impact their school community. Our students are amazing and are demonstrating outstanding 21st century skills on their way to becoming our future leaders.

Open Closets

One of our current projects is working on “Open Closets” in the secondary schools. The purpose of the Open Closet is to provide basic needs for students who may not have access to items in the following areas: food pantry items, a clothing closet, toiletries, bus passes, and various other hygiene items. The goal is to help students get to school to focus on their future instead of what they are wearing or where they are going to find the money for dinner or hygiene items, thus reducing social stigmas associated with the lack of essential needs. The Open Closet will give students direct and discreet access to what they need, when they need it, free of charge.

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FDPS Mission

The Foundation for Dubuque Public Schools (FDPS) supports student achievement by promoting investment in the Dubuque public schools. FDPS board members and staff fulfill this mission by securing financial gifts and grants for school programs and projects that are not currently supported by public tax dollars. Learn more at www.dbqfoundation.org/FDPS.