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Our Mission: To fund innovative academic programs for students of Unit 5 and District 87 public schools.

Beyond the Books Educational Foundation awards 48 grants to District 87 and Unit 5 educators

BLOOMINGTON —Beyond the Books Educational Foundation (BTBEF) announced today its annual grant winners for the Unit 5 and District 87 school districts. This year, BTBEF will award \$93,930 - funding 48 grants to be implemented during the 2023-2024 school year.

Since 1992, BTBEF has invited educators from both District 87 and Unit 5 to submit requests for grant monies to fund innovative and educational projects.

The 2023-2024 grant winners were announced at 4:00 p.m. on Monday, May 8, via a Facebook Live event and will later be congratulated at the schools. Awards are determined through a blind review of the applications – reviewers do not know the name of the district, school or applicant. This year's grant proposals ranged widely, from graphic novels to teach science, to printing 3D vehicles to test aerodynamics, to creating calm spaces to reduce anxiety.

There are three levels of grants – mini (max \$800), standard (max \$5,000), and Beyond the Box (max \$10,000). For the 2023-2024 season:

- D87 was awarded 13 grants, totaling \$24,789
- Unit 5 was awarded 35 grants, totaling \$69,141

This year's Beyond the Box grant recipient is Chad Aubin, a physical education teacher and track coach from Normal West High School. He will receive \$7,861 for his proposal to integrate wrist-based heart rate monitors to provide individualized and inclusive physical education experience for all students.

BTBEF has continued its ability to fund grants thanks to donations from individuals (including school district employees), businesses and other community organizations. Among the larger donations: The Shirk Family Foundation has been a significant contributor for the past 14 years for the Beyond the Box grant; the Ingold family, in memory of Jack and Ann Ingold, provides an annual donation; and Rivian Automotive, Inc., provided an annual donation to support STEM-related grants over three years.

A list of projects funded for the 2023-2024 school year is posted on the Foundation's website at www.beyondthebooksbn.com in the Grants menu.

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