

# C-R Education Foundation debuts Student Grant Initiative with more than \$23,000 in awards.

This March, the Cobleskill-Richmondville Education Foundation introduced a new grant cycle: Student Choice CREF Grants. This initiative provides an unprecedented opportunity for students in the Cobleskill-Richmondville Central School District to brainstorm new and innovative ideas for projects and activities.

This initiative was developed when the CREF Board of Trustees expressed deep concern for the future of education and how to best serve students' needs while navigating through the pandemic. After discussion, the board just decided to *ask students*. And the Quality of Life/Student Choice Grants were born. The Grant Committee, led by trustees Donna Pacatte and Jesse Cosser took on the task of creating criteria for the grants and sharing it with the teachers and students K-12, as well as gathering the grants to put before the board. The result was a student friendly approach to grant writing.

The initiative was presented to faculty with guidelines, who then rolled out the criteria to students. Students, working individually or in groups, wrote grants that created a new opportunity to benefit the entire student body or a large number of students in a novel way. Many groups of students wrote grants that were then discussed and decided on by the CREF Board. The grant had to be something that encourages and creates excitement in a large group of students, shows outside the box thinking, and school-based. Students were encouraged to think big and different! The Board was excited to see grants that helped to build student morale, as they recognize the difficulties that students have faced in the last year.

The students themselves formed grant writing committees and then sought out a faculty member to act as an advisor for their grant. The results were truly amazing. More than \$23,000 was approved by the CREF board of Trustees and awarded to all Cobleskill-Richmondville buildings. In addition to the student grants, C-REF earmarked the Stewarts' grant and added to it for fifth and eighth grade classes to fund moving up ceremonies, as well as supporting the Senior class with their graduation activities. In all, more than \$29,000 was awarded, benefiting every grade level in the district.

Student grants awarded to Cobleskill-Richmondville High School included those facilitated by Colleen Williams for a School-wide Activity Day of Fun, Heather Kamin for a Career Fair, and Mary Jane Lynd for a Graduation and Student Success Mural to be painted by CR high school students.

Golding Middle School was funded for a visit and demonstration by Animal Wildlife Experts with animals, which was guided by Kate Elder.

Radez Elementary School grants include those supervised by Kate Elder for an ice cream party for the whole school, Arielle Fregoe and Kate Elder for a Baking and Cooking Club, PE Staff and Kate Elder for punching bags for the PE department. Further funding was approved to Bryan Rice for Adopt-a-Whale, Jenn Rightmyer for Lego Materials to be shared by the whole school, Christine Thaxter for a Butterfly Garden, and Rebecca Lampron for the Outdoor Club. Additional grants funded were Arielle Frego's for a Tetherball Pole, a Whole Group Art Project supervised by Julie Jones, Courtyard Clean and Update advised by Allie Paige and Danielle Chamberlain, as well as a Ninja Obstacle Course overseen by Will Beekman.

Ryder Elementary student grants awarded were those to Beth Hollenbeck and Diane Truesdell for Surprise Treat Days and Jessie Westfall and Diane Truesdell for MiSci Visitations featuring experiments and lessons led by facilitators from MiSci.

Needless to say, the response from students was well thought out by them and well received and praised by the Cobleskill Richmondville Education Foundation Board of trustees. As is said, "out of the mouths of babes" comes wisdom and creativity. The Foundation plans to continue this new initiative and looks forward to helping to fulfill students' needs, especially following this challenging year, the challenges of which they have risen to meet.

