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LAST YEAR A FRISCO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT (FISD) senior almost had to let his dreams of becoming a doctor fade away. A Frisco student since kindergarten, this successful senior graduated with a 4.0 grade point average (GPA) and was ranked number 15 in his class. He was also Vice President of Student Council, a Relay for Life volunteer, physics mentor and Headstart volunteer – and he worked 25-35 hours each week. It seems that any college would benefit from having him as a student. Yet, because of the money he earned and his family's income, he missed the cutoff for federal or state grants by mere dollars. This is when the Frisco Education Foundation stepped in to ensure that this student was able to live his dream.

"The people of Frisco take care of their own and the Frisco Education Foundation, With Love, It's a Small World and the Frisco Wholesale Lumber A&M Scholarship, provided this son of Frisco with \$24,000 in scholarships to help with college over the next four years," says K. Jonas, director of Frisco Education Foundation. "We are proud to say that after his first semester he had a 3.69 at Texas A&M and is being considered for their honors pre-med program."

It is heartwarming stories like this one that encourage the Frisco Education Foundation, as well as other education programs and foundations in surrounding districts, to continue their efforts every day.

Other organizations in the area that raise funds for specific districts include the Little Elm Awards Foundation (LEAF), created to help local students achieve their goals of higher education and to support faculty and staff through

grants and scholarships. In Prosper, the Prosper Open Foundation helps to raise funds for innovative educational programs, grants and scholarships. The Celina Association of Renaissance Excellence (CARE) contributes to education in Celina by raising money for programs and scholarships.



Funding the Future

By Amanda VanCura

CREATIVE FUNDRAISING OPPORTUNITIES

Each district has a specific organization designed to raise funds to assist with scholarships, grants and educational programs. Though each district is similar in that they all want to do what is best for the students, they differ slightly in how they raise funds, catering to the makeup of their individual communities.

"The Gary Burns Frisco Fun Run at Hall Office Park is our major fundraiser. It provides funds for scholarships, the Grants for Great Ideas program, and continues building the general fund," explains Jonas. "The next Gary Burns Frisco Fun Run will be held again at Hall Office Park, our title sponsor, on October 22, 2005. We've netted just under \$90,000 from the run the last two years. This is due primarily to our generous sponsors as well as the district, community and corporate support with

teams, individual participation and inkind gifts."

Last year, the Foundation added a new fundraiser that supporters hope to continue – Teachers on Ice. "This was a great end-of-the-year event for staff," says Jonas. "We teamed up teachers to play hockey at the Dr. Pepper StarCenter. The Ice Raccoons helped out with equipment and the seniors played with us." Some of the staff members were merely ice skaters while others were skilled hockey players. "This made for some hilarious moments and the opportunity for fans to support players from their schools." Dr. Rick Reedy and Mayor Mike Simpson acted as coaches on opposing teams for this event, which raised approximately \$5,000. "We look toward building this into a major spring fundraiser," Jonas

continued.

"Last spring, the Foundation (Prosper) also awarded more than \$7500 in scholarships and grants to graduating seniors."

The Prosper Open Foundation's primary fundraiser is a golf tournament held every fall. "The inception of the Foundation actually began 14 years ago with a group of fathers whose desire was to raise money to support the golf and tennis programs of the school district," says Pam Toney, Prosper Open Foundation. "They began hosting an annual golf tournament."



and raise money for the district. “We raise funds through an employee payroll deduction program, an annual Denim to Diamonds Gala, an annual student art auction, and business and private donations,” explains Tisha Heskett, Community Relations and Partnerships, Little Elm ISD.

DISTRIBUTING THE FUNDS

It is obvious that Frisco and the surrounding communities have a strong desire to support education and over the past few years alone local districts have helped hundreds of students and teachers achieve their goals.

In 2004, the Frisco Education Foundation awarded 108 scholarships to 71 students at Frisco High School. “We expect to have at least that many or more this year, and have received new scholarships already,” says Jonas. The new Tenet Healthcare Foundation/Centennial Medical Center Matching Scholarship will allow a donor like Centennial Medical Center to sponsor a \$2,000 two-year scholarship with a \$1,000 investment.

In addition, the Frisco Education Foundation offers memorial and honor scholarships. “These scholarships honor a loved one with a scholarship of \$500-\$1,000,” Jonas adds. “We awarded 20 of these last year, which speaks to the caliber of people in Frisco, that in a time of mourning or celebration they choose to make a positive difference in the life of a student.”

During the 2003-04 school year, the Prosper Open Foundation was able to award more than \$33,000 in the form of grants and scholarships. Last spring, the Foundation also awarded more than \$7,500 in scholarships to graduating seniors.

Last year, LEAF awarded several scholarships and have already awarded dual-credit scholarships this year. One of the past recipients, Ashley Glover, is giving back to her community by teaching. Glover used senior scholarships and alumni scholarships to help with her

college education, and then returned to Little Elm as a teacher. Glover is now applying for teaching scholarships to obtain a master’s degree. In addition to raising funds, Heskett states that LEAF has been involved with the schools this year by sponsoring the new teacher luncheon, hosting the senior parents scholarship meetings and hosting the annual student art auction.

GIVING BACK TO EDUCATORS

In addition to raising funds for students and schools, all of these organizations also take care of their teachers. The Prosper Open Foundation and LEAF provide opportunities for teachers to obtain grants and scholarships. In addition, Frisco supports teachers through the Grants for Great Ideas program. “Since awarding the first grants in the fall of 2000, the foundation has provided over \$54,000 to FISD teachers,” says Jonas.

The grants from this program can be used for one classroom, a grade level or the entire district. Some projects that have resulted from these grants include math and science nights at elementary and middle schools, “Free to Read,” individual teacher projects such as the Photonics Lab at Centennial High School, Pioneer Middle School’s “Survivor: Poetry Island” and Bright Elementary’s “Walkways of Wisdom.”

LEADERS OF TOMORROW

Each of these organizations has included in their mission the idea of supporting faculty, staff and students. It is obvious that the community is behind these ideas, coming together to ensure the success of the future. Whether it’s through a Fun Run, an art auction, a Gala or a golf tournament, the community, teachers and staff who are teaching and supporting the students of today are helping to mold the leaders of tomorrow.

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The Foundation was officially created in 1997 and continues to hold the tournament, which raised \$50,000 last September with the support of local businesses, leaders and friends of the Prosper ISD. “The tournament has a long tradition of being a fun outing coupled with a dinner and silent auction,” adds Toney. In addition to this one-day event, a capital fund drive was initiated at the beginning of the school year, but many of the funds still come from the tournament due to its success.

In Little Elm, LEAF offers the community several ways to get involved