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Evanston Community Foundation Awards Imagination Grants

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The Evanston Community Foundation is pleased to announce that it has awarded three Imagination Grants from its Acorn Fund in support of school gardens in the community.

The first grant was awarded to Orrington School for its 'All School Gardening Project'. Under the direction of first grade teacher, Sharon Van Der Kolk, the grant is being used to include more children in the school's growing garden. The students are purchasing seeds to start inside the school's GrowLab and will buy supplies critical to the project's success. According to Ms. Van Der Kolk, "students will practice real life application of their measuring, reading and science skills...this project utilizes the multiple intelligence approach to learning, making learning fun, memorable and appropriate to each grade level curriculum."

A grant was also approved for Oakton School under the direction of second grade teacher, Cathy Doyle. The grant is being used to purchase high quality children's literature related to gardening for the classroom and to give each child in Ms. Doyle's class a garden journal, in which the students are writing poetry, creating imagery and noting observations on the garden in conjunction with hands on gardening projects. The project will culminate in a 'Spring Garden Poetry Jam'. According to Ms. Doyle, "my goal is to immerse my students in poetry using the garden space as their place of inspiration. There they will experiment with poetry writing, learn to take risks as young writers, and eventually publish and share their work."

The third grant was made to Dawes School. The fifth graders at Dawes wrote the grant proposal to request funds for building a new raised bed to replace an old bed that was damaged by a broken pipe in the irrigation system. The project is their 'good-bye to the garden'. Since the garden was created in 2004, they are the first class to participate in the garden for their entire six years at Dawes. Under the direction of volunteer garden coordinator Lynn Hyndman, the new bed uses use eco-friendly recycled materials. According to Dawes Principal Karen Bradley, "It is touching that (the fifth graders) want to leave a permanent mark in the garden for us to remember them by and for them to remember an important aspect of their experience here at Dawes."

Imagination Grants are supported by the Acorn Fund, a gift to the Evanston Community Foundation from a long-time Evanston resident. The Acorn Fund encourages teachers and others to undertake small projects that will make a big difference and that help young people develop their skills and imaginations as they experience working 'with their hands and their heads'.

For more information, contact Cheryl Bondy Kaplan, Program Officer, 847-492-0990, or Kaplan@evanstonforever.org

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