



Community Foundation Announces Grants

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WOODSTOCK - Catherine Olenek wants to teach high school math in the Chicago public school system. "I have studied and read articles during the past year about the education system in Chicago," said Olenek of Algonquin, who graduated this month from Marian Central Catholic High School in Woodstock. "I want to help people. I think I can help fix and make the Chicago public schools better."

Olenek soon will be headed to Briar Cliff University in Sioux City, Iowa, where she will double major in mathematics and education and minor in religious studies. She estimates that the yearly cost of her education will be from \$25,000 to \$28,000, a financial strain on her parents and six younger siblings. But Olenek will get some relief through a \$16,000 scholarship she received from the McHenry County Community Foundation.

Olenek and 31 McHenry County organizations received grants totaling more than \$206,000 from the five-year-old McHenry County Community Foundation. The grant awards were announced Tuesday during the foundation's third annual grant awards celebration at the Crystal Lake Country Club.

Olenek said she was eligible for the scholarship because she will be studying education, was a good student, and wrote an essay on why she wanted to become a teacher. "It will be a great help to my family," said Olenek, who also will pay for her education through an academic scholarship, as well as loans. "I have been in private school since first grade," she said "I have a lot of siblings. The financial stuff has been stressful on my parents."

Recipients of this year's donor-chosen funds included Chicago Master Singers; First Congregational Church of Crystal Lake - Children's Music Program; Harvard Preschool, Woodstock Food Pantry; and the Woodstock Public Library.

Recipients of general grant money included the Challenger Learning Center; Home of the Sparrow; Hospice of Northeastern Illinois; and Turning Point. These recipients were chosen by the foundation's grant committee. The Challenger Learning Center in Woodstock, which among other features offers mock-ups of Mission Control and an orbiting space station, plans by the end of the year to have enhanced its DuPont Telescope/Nebula Conversion Project.

The enhancement to the 150-year-old telescope will take place thanks to a \$5,000 grant the learning center received from the foundation. "Right now, we have somebody tell the story of the [DuPont] Telescope," said Anne Marie Baird, the learning center's community relations manager. "We are looking to make the telescope display more interactive for the children."

The community foundation was formed to give residents a way to use their charitable dollars for the good of McHenry County. The foundation directs its unrestricted grants toward unmet needs within its communities. "These grant recipients convey a wide representation of the good service being provided in our county through human service agencies, recreational, cultural and educational programs," said Jennifer Streit, a member of the community foundation board and grant committee chairwoman.

By MICHAEL GIBBS