

Sept. 2008

## Old Rochester Foundation Awards First Grants to Educational Projects

The recently launched Old Rochester Tri-Town Education Foundation has awarded its first round of small grants to educational enrichment projects that will be held in district schools during the 2008-09 academic year. The Foundation is a fund of the Community Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts (CFSEMA).

A total of \$1,400 was awarded for three projects, which include an interdisciplinary effort at ORR Junior High School based on a book about the survival of explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton after the wreck of his ship, the *Endurance*, during his 1914-1916 expedition; the development of a garden at Old Hammondtown Elementary School in Mattapoisett using the hydroponic method of growing plants in mineral solutions instead of soil; and a peer mentoring pilot project for girls in grades 2-6 at Rochester Memorial School

“We’re excited to have reached a stage in the Foundation’s development where we are able to award grants to worthwhile educational projects,” said.... “The goal of our Foundation is to provide enrichment and innovative projects in our schools over and above what taxpayers fund, and we believe these three projects are representative of that goal.”

Also known as “the Lighthouse Fund,” the Foundation was officially established in November 2006 with the election of a 17-member Board of Directors and a slate of officers. The Foundation is managed by CFSEMA, and is working toward creating a significant endowment from private donations and grants to enhance and enrich the educational experience of students at tri-town public schools. As an endowment involves spending only interest earned on the fund and not capital, the Foundation is likely to benefit the school system for generations to come.

The first grant is for an ORR Junior High School project based on the book by Jennifer Armstrong titled **“Shipwreck at the Bottom of the World: The Extraordinary True Story of Shackleton and the Endurance,”** which was required reading for all students this summer.. The \$600 grant will enable an interdisciplinary team of teachers to create curriculum lessons based on Ms. Armstrong’s account. Themes to be addressed include exploration; nutrition; leadership; map and chart reading; courage; teamwork; resourcefulness; and navigation techniques. In November, Ms. Armstrong will speak to the entire junior high school about her book.

The second grant of \$600 was awarded for a project on **hydroponic gardening**, to be taught by Kevin Tavares at the Old Hammondtown School. Mr. Tavares plans to introduce his students to hydroponic gardening, which is a method that benefits the environment by requiring less water and fewer pesticides. The grant will be used to purchase a 30-site Aeroponics System, which is ideal for growing small plants such as lettuce and basil. Old Hammondtown students currently plant, harvest and deliver produce from their Courtyard Garden to the local Council on Aging, and will continue to do so with the bounty produced by the hydroponic garden. The school hopes this project will raise student awareness of our planet’s health, continue to educate students about healthy food production, and cover materials in the state’s science, technology and engineering curriculum frameworks.

The third grant was awarded for a pilot program at the **Rochester Memorial School** in which older, 6<sup>th</sup> grade girls will mentor younger students. The project will be led by a graduate student from Bridgewater State College, Jamie Pacheco, who is an intern at the Memorial School. She will focus on issues such as self-esteem, peer relationships, healthy habits, and a positive outlook toward school. .

**About the Community Foundation**

Since 1995, area residents have been turning to the Community Foundation to make their philanthropic giving as effective as possible. CFSEMA is a public charity serving thousands of people who share a common concern – improving the quality of life in Southeastern Massachusetts.

While the Foundation's primary grantmaking focus is on the SouthCoast communities of Greater New Bedford, Greater Fall River, and Greater Plymouth County, CFSEMA is a regional foundation serving 41 cities and towns. To date, the Community Foundation has distributed nearly \$6 million from 110 funds to humanitarian, educational and cultural organizations in the region.

To learn more about the Foundation, visit [www.cfsema.org](http://www.cfsema.org).