

Wilkes County Schools



Press Release

January 9, 2020

Stone Foundation Gives over \$325,000 to Grant Schools Wishes

The holidays were a bit brighter this year for sixteen Wilkes County schools thanks to the Stone Foundation's "Wilkes Wishing Well" initiative. They granted over \$325,000 to fund projects that directly impacted students, offered long-term academic benefits to their school, and improved school facilities. The Stone Foundation is comprised of members of the Stone Family; Larry Stone and wife Diane, and their two sons, Larry Jr. and Chris. Through their initiative, The Wilkes Wishing Well, schools were able to receive funds for a dream idea that would enhance learning. They encouraged staff to think outside the box with an innovative approach to make learning come alive. Their application stated, "We need you to dream and share those dreams with us. If it can improve education in your school, dream it." In just its second year of implementation, The Wilkes Wishing Well has provided more than a half-million dollars in grants.

The Stone Foundation was able to give more than their original goal this year thanks to a grant from Lowe's Companies, Inc., which contributed \$100,000 to the Wilkes Wishing Well fund.

"We are proud to partner with Larry Stone and his family and continue our long-standing commitment to education and workforce development in Wilkes County," said Jennifer Weber, Lowe's executive vice president of human resources and chair of the Lowe's Foundation. "This grant announcement will help more of our young people access the tools and resources to help them build even brighter futures."

The Stone Foundation was grateful of Lowe's support with this project. Larry Stone said, "We would like to thank Lowe's for their continued support of education in Wilkes and for their contribution to the Wishing Well Project which enabled us to support more schools and students in Wilkes County."

Technology, improved media centers, STEM education, and facility improvements are just some of the projects that were funded in chosen schools.

C.B. Eller Elementary, Millers Creek Elementary, and Mount Pleasant Elementary all received a grant to help fulfill their wish of touchscreen Chromebook computers for students. The devices will actively engage students, while providing access to information and allow students to practice the skills needed for the demands of 21st century assessments. Beginning in 2019, all students in grades fourth and fifth are required to take their assessments online. Principal of Millers Creek Elementary, Rebecca Mastin stated, "Students need many opportunities to practice and become familiar with online assessment programs in order to be prepared for their high stake assessments. Without daily access, students do not have the much-needed time to become successful online assessors."

Central Wilkes Middle School received a grant to update the books in their media center. The update will include providing students access to new books which include fiction, STEM reading materials, and audio books.

East Wilkes Middle School will fulfill their wish of improving safety by purchasing a new door fob security system. This will replace the current keypad door functionality and will allow teachers and staff quick entry into the building.

Moravian Falls Elementary School received assistance to purchase additional resources for "La Escuelita", a mobile unit located in Country Square Mobile Home Park, which is used for after school programs. Resources will include tools to help students have study privacy, a listening station with books on CD to help bilingual students, and new books.

Mulberry Elementary School will be remodeling their media center with the grant they received to create a more inspiring 21st century learning environment for students and staff. This will include new bookshelves, carpet and lighting.

North Wilkesboro Elementary School will fulfill their wish of introducing the Second Steps program to students with the grant they received. This program will teach students ways to cope with social and emotional issues.

North Wilkes High School received assistance to purchase supplies to create a STEAM lab to help students better understand the engineering design process. STEAM lessons involve hands-on inquiry, student-centered learning, teamwork and rigor.

Ronda-Clingman Elementary School will be installing a central air conditioning system in their gymnasium with the grant money they received.

Traphill Elementary School received a grant to purchase touchscreen Chromebooks and technology resources to teach students computational thinking and engineering principles.

West Wilkes High School will fulfill their wish of remodeling their media center in order to provide an open space with adaptable furniture that students can arrange according to their learning needs. The remodel will include new bookcases, carpet, furniture and books.

West Wilkes Middle School received assistance to purchase new TI-84 graphing calculators as well as Scholastic reading book sets. These new resources will help provide a strong foundation of technological tools students need in order to be confident and prepared for upcoming grade levels.

Wilkes Central High School will utilize grant funds to install malleable seating equipment for one of their math classrooms. This seating will provide a more authentic learning environment that adapts to the unique needs of all students.

Wilkes Early College High School received a grant to create a new cafeteria space. This will include new microwaves, new seating, centralized trash and recycling receptacles, and improving the overall environment of the space.

Wilkesboro Elementary school received assistance for phase one of new playground equipment. This phase will include removing parts of current playground equipment and adding new separate freestanding components to provide new play spaces for students. For phase two, the Stone Foundation offered to match money raised up to \$40,000 toward completing the project.

The week before winter break can be stressful for teachers and students alike, attempting to stay focused in spite of the excitement in the air. Larry Stone and his wife, Diane made surprise visits to each selected school to inform them their wish had been granted before schools closed for the holidays. Despite the busyness felt in schools during this time, the Stone Family's generosity conveyed a lifelong message to students and staff; it is more important to give than receive. Some principals were speechless to the news of their grant; and others could not wait to announce it over the intercom for the entire school to hear. The Stone Foundation is making a huge impact on Wilkes County Schools by their goal of enhancing education one school at a time. In a rapidly changing economy, it is important to give students the chance to be successful in new careers and fields. By encouraging school leaders to dream, they are supporting the unique opportunities that will have a lasting impact on students for years to come.

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