

Spring Soiree raises \$53K for PTEF



Julie St. Marie and Jill Landes review the event's auction items.

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Kirk Boxleitner
kboxleitner@ptleader.com

The Port Townsend Education Foundation's annual Spring Soiree began March 2 with a look back at what the event had accomplished to date.

PTEF board member Missy Nielsen reported to the diners and bidders at the Northwest Maritime Center that, over the past 11 years, the Spring Soiree has raised \$500,000, which had funded 206 grants in turn.

Among the expenses covered have been ensuring that all Port Townsend High School juniors are able to take the Preliminary SAT exam, purchasing a laser cutter and commercial kitchen stoves, and "fostering curiosity" and "lifting challenged learners," in Nielsen's words

PTEF Board Secretary Carrie Andrews noted the format of this year's event differed from the grant showcase and campaign kickoff last year, by more closely resembling the larger dinner auctions the foundation has held in years past.

"We definitely had better attendance and raised more funds this year than last," Andrews said. "The attendees seemed to enjoy getting dressed up and having a gala event."

This year's Spring Soiree drew 134 attendees and a gross of more than \$53,000, not including several in-kind donations received from Port Townsend businesses.

In turn, funds raised at the event are slated to be used to award grants for the 2019-20 school year, with the goal of reaching every student in the district, according to Andrews.

“While our funds are not able to meet all the requests submitted by teachers, everything we raise goes to funding more equipment and enrichment experiences for students,” Andrews said.

Andrews added that every middle-school student in the district will take part in the Maritime Discovery program “Salish to Olympia, in which students monitor water quality, visit the state capital and experience maritime fields of work.

Meanwhile, she pledged all fourth- and fifth-graders would participate in the Tall Ship Sailing and History Experience programs.

“Our grants are awarded to proposals that promote lifelong learning, strive for equality, encourage community, create citizens of the world, directly involve students as fully as possible, and address specific learning objectives and goals,” Andrews said.

Andrews saw the Spring Soiree as a chance not only to fund-raise, but to “friend raise,” sharing with donors the achievements of students stemming from those grants.

A trio of students shared how the grants had made a difference in their educational experiences.

“Going to (the Valve software company) in Bellevue with my class helped me decide to choose STEAM as an elective class, because I wanted to be able to learn more about the computer programming that I saw on the field trip in class at school,” sixth-grader Juliette O’Hara said.

Fourth-grader Noah Isenberg recounted how “I had fallen into a pattern of my writing, but Writers in the Schools helped me realized that I could put more thought into my work. Now I’m starting to write more often, and I’ve even started my own poetry journal at home. I definitely feel like a more accomplished writer than I did before.”

High school senior Cyan Adams said it was “exciting to see all the people at the event who help make my school experience so engaging.”

The PTEF will begin accepting grant applications from teachers in July, and will announce its grant awards in October.

Although the Spring Soiree is the foundation’s major fundraiser for the year, it will continue to raise money by selling pavers, which will be installed on the new Salish Coast Elementary campus soon.

“Because of the generous support from community donors and businesses at this event, additional funds are now available to be awarded to teachers in the Port Townsend School District, that not only grant awards towards transportation, technical equipment, artists in residence, performance experiences and maritime discoveries, but also give flight to those whose abilities are beyond the scope of the district budget,” Andrews said.