



May 5, 2006

Second annual Panther Foundation GrandGala a roaring success
Helping to make the difference between a good education and an exceptional one for School District 16 kids

The second annual Panther Foundation GrandGala to benefit students in Spring Lake Park School District 16 was a huge success. The event took place on Saturday, April 29 at the clubhouse of the Tournament Players Club (TPC) of the Twin Cities golf course in Blaine

Proceeds from tickets to the dinner, silent and live auction, and a car raffle raised in excess of \$40,000 for the Panther Foundation. Funds will be used to award future grants to fund innovative projects that will enrich educational experiences of pre-school through 12th grade students in the Spring Lake Park Schools which serve students Blaine, Spring Lake Park, and Fridley.

A live auction netted \$14,000 through bids on items including sports memorabilia autographed by Brad Radke, Jim Kleinsasser, and Daunte Culpepper; diamond jewelry, dinner at Morton's with a golfer participating in the 3M Championship seniors golfer tour at the TPC of the Twin Cities, a Hawaiian Feast hosted by superintendent Don Helmstetter and high school principal Glenn Martin; and another featuring the use of a Corvette for three days.

A highlight of the GrandGala was drawing the name for the winner of a 2004 Cavalier, courtesy of Roger Moody, president of Friendly Chevrolet in Fridley, the Gala's key sponsor. The winning ticket belonged to Marlene Priebe, 74, of Deer River who was in town to visit grandchildren in Blaine.

An item not even on the program ended up receiving \$8,000 in funding, thanks to the generosity of those present at the Gala. Funds were raised for a portable classroom computer lab consisting of wireless laptop computers and docking stations, which would be located at the Westwood complex of Westwood Elementary and Westwood Middle School. The portable lab would be available to any classroom or group of students at the complex, which houses all District 16 students in grades 4-8. Ultimately, the District hopes to be able to set up similar portable labs in each school over the next few years. The goal is

to reach \$20,000 to fund the Westwood portable computer lab project, so additional donations would be welcomed.

The Panther Foundation is less than two years old, but is already making a difference. “We’ve been able to fund an array of innovative programs and unique opportunities in the past, and now we have an opportunity to fund even more excellent projects,” said Terry Dussault, Foundation chair. “We have an incredibly supportive community and we are grateful.” Working “hand-in-hand with the school district,” he added, “this will help to make the difference between a good education and an exceptional one for hundreds of kids.”

Theresa Berset-Klis, Foundation member and GrandGala chairperson, said she “couldn’t be more happy with the generosity of the sponsors, donors, and attendees.” It was “a huge success” she said, “we were able to raise more funds than the previous year, and every dollar raised will be an investment in our local kids.”

In less than two years, the Foundation has awarded 24 grants totaling nearly \$42,000, positively affecting over 2,400 District 16 students. Examples include:

- Life-Centered Career Education
- Kindergarten Student/Senior Citizen Buddy System
- Recovery-Based Education Testimony, U. S. House of Representatives
- Alcohol/Tobacco Decisions Mentoring Program
- The Voice Peer Education Theater
- Elementary Students Kindness Retreat
- Eighth Hour: Homework Help for Middle School Students
- Summer Life Skills Institute
- Student Participation in the National Space Academy
- Adaptive Art Program for At-Risk Students

Panther Foundation membership is available for as little \$25 per year. Call 763-795-5155 for more information on membership opportunities or visit pantherfoundation.org.

For more information:

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