

Christmas has come early for 28 Wagoner educators, just in time for the start of their new school year. On Aug. 13, the Wagoner Education Foundation, Inc. presented grants totaling \$14,205 to fund projects for those teachers that otherwise may go unfunded. Grants ranged from \$199.64 to \$600, depending on the project. Since WEF was founded in 2010, the organization has awarded an incredible \$98,765 to local educators through their grant program. The first amount in 2012 was \$5,579 while the largest amount issued to date was \$20,192 in 2018. President Janet Lane said the number of requests were down this year. Since \$20,000 was set back for grant dispersal, the remaining amount will remain in an account for future grants. "In a small community like ours, the Foundation is very pleased to continue the work of the founders by raising funds to support Wagoner classroom teachers," Lane said. Grant winners come from all five Wagoner schools with the largest amount of funding going to teachers from Ellington Early Childhood Center for students in pre-kindergarten through first grades. All academic areas plus STEM, fine arts and special education were included. Comprising the selection committee were WEFI board members Karen Jackson (chairman) and Cristy Collier and retired Wagoner educators Donna Dorr and Patti Butler. "One of the most interesting requests came from Brandy Rhodes at Ellington for a chicken coop to use for either an outdoor classroom or agriculture in the classroom project," Lane noted. The WEFI's primary source for grants and its only fundraiser is the Spring Fashion Show. In March, the show raised over \$16,000. Lane said other donations and contributions come to the Foundation in various ways such as applying to other entities who fund educational organizations. Among the grants WEFI has received include those from the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence, Lake Region Round Up and the Walton Foundation. Individual contributions are matched by employers while other friends of Wagoner simply want to contribute to the success of the Foundation. She noted many Wagoner school employees donate to the Foundation monthly through payroll deduction. "The entire community works together to give Wagoner teachers opportunities to enhance education in their classrooms," Lane said.

â€œItâ€™s a credit to the community because they get asked for money all the time.â€• She is proud of the fact that nearly \$100,000 in funds have been given back to Wagoner Schools through the Foundation. â€œIn the whole scheme of the WPS budget, \$15,000 (this year) is not a lot of money. But when you look at the overall picture of \$100,000, thatâ€™s pretty impactful,â€• Lane admitted. â€œWe are pleased to have an impact on the schools through the community. The Foundation is just the catalyst and we follow through with it.â€• Be the first to know

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