

# Learning Links 2009

## 31 grants totaling \$23,624

The Learning Links program offers grants of up to \$800 to public school teachers in Avery, Graham, Jackson, Madison, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford and Swain counties so that they may provide "hands-on," creative experiences for their students. The goal of this program is to increase students' enthusiasm for learning and staying in school, ultimately through graduation. These grants are made possible by the Ben W. and Dixie Glenn Farthing Charitable Fund of The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina.

### Avery County (\$3,923)

**Avery Middle School**                      *Putting the WOW Back Into Science*                      \$800  
Sixth grade students will work on soil testing and profiling. With micro-slide viewers, these 105 students will also be able to look at the microscopic plants and animals that live in the soil. All the activities will be designed to strengthen the students' enthusiasm for science.

**Cranberry Middle School**                      *Medieval Guild Fair*                      \$791  
The school's 6th grade will plan a medieval fair, using the skills they learn at a craft or trade such as candle-making, baking and quilting. Sixty-two students will participate and have the opportunity to compare life in medieval days to modern times.

**Crossnore Elementary School**                      *My Neighbors Around the World*                      \$800  
The project aims to teach 17 1st-graders the value of diversity. Using a large classroom rug with a map of the world, ethnic puppets and books about families from different cultures around the world, the students will learn how to appreciate different customs, family traditions and celebrations.

**Crossnore Elementary School**                      *Soil Conserv. & Waste Reduct.thru Vermicompost.*                      \$800  
Two 3rd grade classrooms with a total of 29 students will create and maintain a vermicomposting system that uses worms to transform organic waste into nutrient-rich topsoil. They will learn about humus, clay and sand and about the problems of waste management and reliance on landfills.

**Freedom Trail Elementary School**                      *Click!*                      \$732  
These 1st grade students will become detectives as they explore the world around them. They will use digital cameras on field trips, at home and at school to document a variety of experiences spanning various curricula. Twenty-two students will be served.

### Graham County (\$1,600)

**Robbinsville Elementary School**                      *Inquiry in Action*                      \$800  
Fourth grade students will be actively engaged in structured small group and individual cross-curricular projects, using the students' own questions as topics. The 47 children will be guided to think for themselves, to build and understand knowledge and to use this knowledge in their own lives.

**Robbinsville Elementary School**      *Kids Cooperate*      \$800  
Fifty-five 4th grade students will participate in a cooperative learning environment that will allow them to engage in a series of games and activities requiring teamwork. Within these activities, students will have changing roles including group leader. They will then be able to use these new skills to tackle obstacles especially designed for them at Whisper Mountain Camp.

### **Jackson County (\$3,434)**

**Blue Ridge School**      *Hometown Heroes*      \$720  
The project is intended to highlight community members that the 28 7th grade students consider to be heroes. They will conduct and tape their interviews, then compile them into a book to be printed in house. A DVD will be made and presented to the PTO and also be available to the general public. The project will be cross-curricular among social studies, computer skills and language arts.

**Cullowhee Valley Elementary**      *Mountain Fretters Dulcimer Club*      \$800  
This project continues to involve students in grades 2-8 that enjoy experiencing the culture of their rich mountain heritage. The two groups, beginner and advanced, are in need of new instruments tailored to their experience and abilities. Sixty-five students will be able to enjoy twice a week classes before school and gain self-confidence as well as musical knowledge.

**School of Alternatives**      *CROSSROADS Adventure Program*      \$740  
Jackson County Public Schools have suspended field trips on account of current economic conditions. This proposal asks for funds to pay for gas, so students can still have experiences outside the classroom. Among the activities planned are trips to the Health Adventure, the Highlands Nature Center, the Balsam Mountain Trust Aquatic Watershed and involvement in several community service projects.

**Scotts Creek Elementary School**      *Japanese and American Garden*      \$479  
This collaborative project between Scotts Creek School and a school in Japan has been ongoing since 2002. This coming year will see the final phases of this garden project, including additional stepping stones, planting ground cover between the stones, and adding azaleas to the garden.

**Smokey Mountain Elementary**      *Blue Ribbon ART Exhibition*      \$695  
K-8 students will be given the opportunity to create a work of art, submit it to an exhibition committee, attend an opening reception, view art on display, and receive ribbon awards. The middle school students will visit the Asheville Art Museum for a behind-the-scenes look at the career options available in the art field. All 427 students will be served.

### **Madison County (\$1,597)**

**Brush Creek Elementary**      *Science and Math*      \$797  
Twenty-five 1st grade students will use a variety of manipulatives - construction paper, number tiles, a microscope - to integrate hands-on activities into their math and science lessons.

**Madison High School**      *Engaging Communities & Dispelling Stereotypes...*      \$800  
This project is a collaborative partnership with the Literature Department at UNC Asheville. Both the high school and university classes will read Ron Rash's historical novel "The World Made Straight," set in Madison County, and learn concepts related to cultural heritage, race, ethnicity, and social inequality, as

well as humans' relationship with the environment unique to the Appalachian mountains. They will participate in discussions, forums and visit landmarks in the novel. Project results will be presented at the Appalachian Studies Association conference.

### **Mitchell County (\$7,470)**

***Buladean Elementary Sch***                      *Lights, Camera, Action*                      \$800  
The 4<sup>th</sup> grade will read "Charlotte's Web," visit the Barter Theatre in Bristol, Virginia, to see the play and then perform a play of their own. The 10 students will all have a role to play in this project, which will also include inviting parents to view a performance of their play. The children will learn to work as a team and how to express themselves in a creative manner.

***Buladean Elementary Sch***                      *Reach for the Stars*                      \$800  
Students will be inspired to gain a better understanding of our infinite universe by participating in night-watch events using a telescope. They will also create moon journals, web pages and power point presentations. There will be a visit to the Catawba Science Center and the Bays Mountain Planetarium. The project will directly serve 16 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students, but all 78 students in grades K-8 will be invited to join in the night-watch events.

***Deyton Elementary School***    *Out of this World An Interactive Learning Experience*                      \$480  
The 3<sup>rd</sup> grade (100 students) will enjoy KidSenses, an interactive museum for children that offers a portable planetarium. The KidSenses staff will set up the explorer dome and provide the students with hands-on experiences that will sharpen their understanding of the stars, moon, sun and planets.

***Gouge Elementary School***                      *Ain't Nothing But a Hound Dog*                      \$770  
NC author Elizabeth Bagby will visit Gouge to discuss her book "Lucky's Plott" with the 4th grade classes. Sixty-four students will learn about the Plott hound, NC's state dog, and meet her dog Lucky. The project will allow the students to learn more about writing, and afford them the opportunity to create artwork such as designing a quilt square about NC state symbols.

***Gouge Elementary School***                      *Click, Clack, Moo and More*                      \$800  
Forty-six students in the three 2nd grade classes will have the opportunity to see a live performance of "Click, Clack, Moo," a book on the accelerated reading list. Students will compare the book to the play and then compose their own story about recycling to follow up on the book's theme.

***Gouge Elementary School***    *Helping Our Mother (Earth) While Helping Each Other*                      \$750  
The 3rd and 4th grade classes will work on the Empty Bowls Project that helps feed the hungry in Mitchell County. In making their own bowls for the event, they will also learn about conservation of our natural resources and create reuses for discarded materials.

***Gouge Elementary School***    *Why Try: The Journey to High School Graduation*                      \$670  
Why Try is a program that serves elementary through high school students. It teaches critical social and emotional principles to help students overcome challenges and improve outcome in the areas of truancy, overall behavior and academics. This project will serve the 60 4th grade students at Gouge Elementary.

**Greenlee Primary School**                      *Phonics x Fun Express*                      \$800  
Eighty-eight Kingergarteners will study Letterland, a phonics-based approach to teaching children to read, write and spell. Students will then travel to Tweetsie Railroad, which will be transformed into a magical Letterland filled with favorite characters.

**Greenlee Primary School**                      *Storybook Soundtracks and Folksong Frenzies*                      \$800  
K to grade 2 students will study regional folk songs, the development of singing, artistic expression and rhythm development. They will learn the importance of folk music to our local culture and history and emphasize family connections through parent nights where the families will sing and play musical games.

**Harris Middle School**                      *Get Your Hands (and Mind) on Math!*                      \$800  
Using the Center Stage Math program, 16 students in 6th grade will engage in math-related partner activities, games and individual learning experiences. The ready-made materials provide all activity cards, game boards and manipulatives needed for students to get right to work.

### **Polk County (\$800)**

**Polk Central Elementary School**                      *Polk Central Nature Trail*                      \$800  
An approximately half-mile loop trail will provide an accessible forest outdoor education area for the school's approximately 460 elementary students, who will work on the development and maintenance including seating and trail and plant markers. The trail will complement an existing butterfly garden, vegetable and herb garden beds, and a fully equipped science lab.

### **Rutherford County (\$1,600)**

**Pinnacle Elementary School**                      *Leaping Lizards Math Start*                      \$800  
MathStart books and manipulatives will enhance math instruction for the entire 1st grade population of 60 students. The program will help the children make sense of complex information quickly and also help them develop their critical thinking skills and problem solving capabilities.

**Pinnacle Elementary School**                      *Read-At-Home Backpacks*                      \$800  
The project is intended to reinforce the school-home connection, by allowing the 22 1st grade students to take a backpack home nightly with the supplies to enjoy a bedtime story. Each backpack will have a read-along CD, a book and a laminated activity sheet.

### **Swain County (\$1,600)**

**Cherokee Middle School**                      *Earth Day Extravaganza*                      \$800  
Pre-K to 8 students will create art entries, individually and as class-groups. The community event will include informational books, green product information and environmental games. Environmental education artifacts will be showcased in an effort to celebrate the earth both from a cultural and an environmental perspective.

**Swain County High School***China Comes to Swain*

\$800

Swain County High School boasts a new teacher from China who will be teaching the students Mandarin Chinese as well as giving them a taste of Chinese culture. The 500 students will also research and build traditional Chinese costumes in observance of Spring Festival, China's largest annual celebration. A performance will be planned for parents and community members.

**Swain County Middle School***I Can Relate*

\$800

The project is designed to engage students in reading and character education. All 136 8th grade students will read books as a schoolwide initiative, and a series of lessons and activities will prepare them to produce a movie illustrating real-life 'I Can Relate' responses to themes such as peer-pressure, empathy, adversity, diversity, self-respect, self-control, honor, gratitude, friendship, integrity and loyalty.

**Swain County West Elementary***Infusing Art into the Reg. Elem. Classroom Subj.*

\$800

Fifty-eight 3rd grade students will use art materials to incorporate art projects into their reading, math, social studies and science classes. This will help students see how connectivity works in real life and also allow them to be creative in their thinking and use of these connections.