Grantmaking at the Dart Foundation focuses on finding opportunities that not only align with our mission but also leverage our partners’ resources to create a substantial impact. Our Dart Foundation Board accomplishes this by determining whether our funding would supplement a project or program in a way that is truly additive.

The word that epitomizes this giving philosophy is tangible. This means funding projects with an actual physical presence—objects you can touch, see and feel. It also signifies the value we place on finding projects that are concrete and results-driven as opposed to those that are vague and difficult to evaluate.

In this edition of our Annual Report, we are pleased to share stories of our tangible contributions across the country. Eighth graders in Maryland experience a hands-on lesson in chemistry and design engineering using everyday items like lard to create soap. Meanwhile, hospital administrators in mid-Michigan oversee a new, state-of-the-art cancer facility that brings to the area high-quality healthcare, including an expanded relationship with the internationally renowned Mayo Clinic.

We are proud that the majority of our grants result from a collaboration with organizations in our giving communities. The Dart Foundation directs funding of capital improvements, equipment and reusable materials while our funding partners contribute valuable expertise and additional resources, usually in the form of personnel and operational support. Together, we create a tangible difference by turning inspirational, innovative ideas into reality.

MESSAGE FROM ARIANE DART

Dart Foundation Trustee

MAKING A TANGIBLE DIFFERENCE

“Together, we create a tangible difference by turning inspirational, innovative ideas into reality.”
Holt Public Schools in Holt, Michigan, prides itself on equipping students with the knowledge and skills needed to become college and career ready. Holt’s administration and teachers recently sought to expand their curriculum beyond traditional coursework.

To better develop students’ critical problem-solving skills—an important trait for workers in a variety of important and increasingly high-tech industries—Holt established a district-wide education track for students interested in STEM careers and built STEM coursework into other parts of its curriculum. According to Superintendent Dr. David Hornak, “Holt’s STEM program promises to engage the students in a positive learning environment that encourages them to ask questions and delve deeper into the subject matter.”

The Dart Foundation supported this endeavor with a generous grant totaling more than $234,000 to purchase computers and other tangible equipment. The new programming builds on students’ interests, leverages prior learning experiences and provides a multitude of opportunities to approach learning in a new way. Students will learn to investigate problems and develop solutions much like scientists, technicians, engineers and mathematicians do in the workforce.

Dr. Hornak weighed in on Holt’s collaboration with the Dart Foundation: “We are pleased that the Foundation has partnered with us to fund the hardware necessary to develop robust STEM programming across the district. The funding from this grant will leave a legacy and impact several thousand students annually.”

Together, the Dart Foundation and Holt Public Schools are committed to preparing students to compete in an increasingly competitive global marketplace.
Have you ever watched bats sweeping for mosquitoes at dusk? These mysterious creatures influence the health of natural ecosystems as well as the economy. Bats also consume other insects that damage crops. Even bat droppings serve as rich natural fertilizer.

Sadly, a serious ecological issue faces the North American bat population. White-nose syndrome (WNS) is a devastating disease, named for the white fungus that infects the muzzle, ears and wings of hibernating bats. Since the discovery of WNS in New York in 2006, the disease has killed more than six million bats in more than 30 states and five Canadian provinces. In some caves and mines, 90 percent or more of bat colonies have died from WNS.

Courtesy of a $2,060 grant from the Dart Foundation, General Ray Davis Middle School students in Stockton, Georgia, used science to bring awareness to the plight of their local bat population. Teacher Katy King said, “I feel this starts with educating our youth to care about what is happening here in Georgia and to make the connection that any interruption in the ecology chain has a direct impact on the environment.”

The Dart Foundation Board places great emphasis on tangible items, so the grant proceeds purchased equipment and materials for this ecology lesson. Students built bat houses as well as bat roosting pouches and donated them to the state park system. The grant also purchased species identification books and field guides. Leveraging resources from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, experts used video conferencing to interact with the students and to teach them about the disease and the latest conservation measures.

“I feel this starts with educating our youth to care about what is happening here in Georgia.”

Katy King
Teacher, General Ray Davis Middle School
Basic arithmetic is a fundamental component of STEM education, and the tools that help perform this critical function naturally have evolved over time. In the mid-1960s, large electronic desktop calculators started replacing manual counting devices. By the late 80s, use of handheld graphing calculators had become prevalent in many advanced math classes across the country.

Today’s graphing calculators differ drastically from the various computation tools used in the past. These small programmable computers plot graphs, solve simultaneous equations and allow users to create customized programs for scientific, engineering and education applications. The Texas Education Agency and the KIPP Dallas-Fort Worth Public Schools recognize that students must learn to use present-day technology to succeed.

To prepare students for the competitive landscape that awaits them after graduation, the State of Texas requires students in 8th grade and above to use graphing calculators during all math classes and statewide testing. In the KIPP Dallas-Fort Worth District, most students live below the poverty level, and their families simply cannot afford to purchase graphing calculators that adhere to current standards.

With a $5,000 grant from the Dart Foundation, the district purchased a set of 40 TI 84 Plus CE graphing calculators for 8th graders at Destiny Middle School. “We want to provide our KIPPsters with the opportunities to experience the academic content,” said Esmerelda Cardoso, Principal. “Having a class set of graphing calculators allows our teachers to bring the math content to life and arm our KIPPsters with the graphing skills they will need for all of their high school math courses.”

High-quality instruction and suitable teaching resources are both necessary components of all educational programming. By providing access to cutting-edge devices, the Dart Foundation and the KIPP Dallas-Fort Worth District demonstrate their commitment to providing the resources necessary to succeed.

“Having a class set of graphing calculators allows our teachers to bring the math content to life and arm our KIPPsters with the graphing skills they will need for all of their high school math courses.”

Esmerelda Cardoso
Principal, KIPP Dallas-Fort Worth District
Being imaginative isn’t always easy when it comes to aligning a class project to both Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and state STEM Standards of Practice, but teachers at Lockerman Middle School in Denton, Maryland, recently used an everyday place to find inspiration to create an extraordinary lesson on chemical reactions.

Selected from the shelves of a grocery store, lard, white chalk, modeling compound, marshmallows, coconut oil and other materials were provided to students immersed in the engineering design process to problem-solve how to use fats to make the best soap. Throughout the six-week unit, students studied the characteristics of chemical reactions, learned how to explain the process and documented their evidence. A $5,000 grant from the Dart Foundation purchased the tangible items necessary to supplement the project, including beakers, stirring rods, burette stands, thermometers, batteries and petri dishes.

Supervisor of Instruction Deborah George expressed appreciation for the Dart Foundation grant. “We are thankful for the Foundation’s support. The funds allowed us to teach the students about chemical reactions in the context of real-world scenarios. These hands-on lessons are designed to engage the students in inquiry, logical reasoning and critical thinking, all in an enjoyable and interactive environment. We hope the lessons excite the students about STEM learning and pique their interest in possible future STEM-related careers.”

“These hands-on lessons are designed to engage the students in inquiry, logical reasoning and critical thinking, all in an enjoyable and interactive environment.”

Deborah George
Supervisor of Instruction, Lockerman Middle School
Cancer touches almost everyone in some way, whether it is supporting a loved one during treatment or personally tackling this difficult disease after a diagnosis. Many cancer patients commute long distances for high-quality medical services. Mid-Michigan residents can now get great care closer to home with the construction of the state-of-the-art Sparrow Herbert-Herman Cancer Center in Lansing, Michigan.

With help from a $500,000 capital improvement grant from the Dart Foundation, Sparrow Health System opened the new cancer center last summer. The Foundation’s gift specifically helped establish the Dart Foundation Medical Oncology Unit. The unit, along with the rest of the cancer center, will serve thousands of mid-Michigan cancer patients and their support networks each year.

The leading-edge treatment center streamlines the delivery of care, allowing patients to see multiple specialists within the same visit, and encourages collaboration among medical professionals. In addition to serving as the largest regional site for clinical research trials, Sparrow also expanded its partnership with the Mayo Clinic Care Network. Local physicians confer with Mayo specialists on individual treatment plans on a daily basis using the latest technology.

The Dart Foundation Board believes access to quality healthcare strengthens communities and is proud to be part of this collaborative effort. In the words of Sparrow President and CEO Dennis Swan, “We are profoundly grateful to the Dart Foundation for their generous support, which will help us ensure high-quality and comprehensive care of our patients. Our new cancer center is a signature project and a wonderful resource for the mid-Michigan region. Best-in-class treatment is available right here as close to home as possible.”

As the Foundation moves into its next fiscal year, we look forward to finding additional opportunities to improve the healthcare infrastructure in our other giving communities across the nation.

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FIGHTING CANCER CLOSER TO HOME
The Dart Foundation is a private family foundation established in 1984 by William A. and Claire T. Dart. Headquartered in Mason, the mid-Michigan area has long been a focal point of Dart Foundation philanthropy. Each year grants are also awarded in other areas of the United States and internationally.

The mission of the Dart Foundation is to advance and encourage youth education, primarily in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. We also support projects that strengthen and improve the quality of life in numerous identified communities.

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