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Community Foundation's LEAD Council Awards Grants To Two North Country Schools

The Northern New York Community Foundation's LEAD Council recently awarded grants totaling \$10,000 to two North Country school districts following their participation in the "LEAD Your School Challenge."

The school-based project was developed by the LEAD Council, which is an advisory group of nearly 20 young professionals affiliated with the Community Foundation. The goal of competition was to cultivate and instill willingness in school students to volunteer in their community and learn more about the mission and services of local non-profit organizations. Each participating school was eligible for up to \$10,000 in grant funding. LEAD awarded a \$6,000 grant to South Jefferson and a \$4,000 grant to Copenhagen for their efforts.

"One of the best outcomes of this student-driven initiative is our youth are educated about the meaning of community philanthropy and understand the important work of area non-profits," said Max DelSignore, Community Foundation assistant director. "These students have proven to be great collaborators and citizens that genuinely care about the communities where they live."

At South Jefferson, students from across the high school and middle school created a project that either raised awareness or funds for five non-profit agencies in Jefferson County. They collaborated with organizations such as the Children's Home of Jefferson County, Children's Miracle Network, Credo Community Center, Hospice of Jefferson County and the Watertown Urban Mission. The students garnered the grant award based on their community impact, addressing specific local needs and engaging their peers.

"Our students' eyes were opened to the needs of the community and they were eager to help out," said Karen Denny, high school principal at South Jefferson. "Teaming up with non-profit organizations proved to be motivating and rewarding, which ultimately pushed the team to

see the project to completion. The goal of promoting volunteerism and increasing awareness of the needs of various non-profits in our community was certainly achieved.”

Students at Copenhagen focused on raising awareness for mental health issues on campus and in the community. The students engaged two local non-profits – the Mental Health Association in Jefferson County and Transitional Living Services of Northern New York – in providing resources and exercises to educate their peers about the effects of mental health.

“The ‘LEAD Your School Challenge’ was a great opportunity for our students to pick a project that was meaningful to them and work to achieve their goals,” said Copenhagen superintendent Scott Connell. “What they learned about selflessness and giving back to their community are skills that will pay great dividends in their futures. Not just for them, but for the communities they live in.”

The LEAD Council was established by the Community Foundation as a platform to give young professionals in the North Country a voice in the conversation about community philanthropy. The cohort takes a thoughtful and strategic approach to addressing community needs in Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties. The program is made possible by support from Slack Chemical Company, Fort Drum Mountain Community Homes, Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization and BCA Architects & Engineers.

The Northern New York Community Foundation makes grants to support the work of non-profit organizations and provides scholarships to individuals in Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence Counties. This work is made possible by donors who have established permanent, charitable funds with the Foundation during their lifetimes or through their wills and have a general, broad and enduring interest in supporting the quality of life in the North Country.

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