



Cox Employees Award Special Grants to Gulf Coast Schools

Pensacola, FL - Cox Communications employees have awarded eight grants to local schools, through Cox Charities Innovation in Education Grants. The program provides employee funded grants of up to \$2,500 for classroom programs and curriculum that encourage and promote students' ingenuity and imagination. Earlier this year, nearly 40 applications were submitted by schools in Escambia and Okaloosa Counties.

Cox Charities is 100 percent funded by local employees through payroll deductions. A committee of 13 Gulf Coast employees then reviewed and chose grant recipients based on the amount of funding available.

"Our local employees fund these grants out of their own paychecks to support impactful, innovative programs in classrooms," said David Deliman, vice president of Cox's Gulf Coast Market. "We salute educators for developing creative ways to teach to today's students. Our employees love helping Gulf Coast schools achieve these teaching strategies."

This year's recipients of the Cox Charities Innovation in Education grants are:

- **Beulah Elementary School – Bringing Reading to Life (\$500)** – This program will help third graders transition learning by helping them better comprehend the stories they read by providing them with engaging experiences and discussions. The class will develop projects and activities based on the books they read and discuss.
- **Bob Sikes Elementary School – Outdoor Learning Center for Students with Special Needs (\$1,250)** - Horticulture therapy is the use of plants and gardens to promote health and wellness in students with disabilities. This form of therapy encompasses many garden activities where the students are cultivating, thinning, weeding, watering, sowing, harvesting, and taking soil samples, to nature activities such as planting butterfly gardens, putting up bird houses, as well as activities using products from the garden to make crafts and cooking. Also, garden therapy will provide spaces for other people to sit alone and have time to think. This project will allow the students to have different kinds of sensory inputs, like tasting fruits, smelling flowers, touching different vegetation, stones, and water, as well as listening to the sounds of nature.

- **Escambia Westgate School – Westgate Sensory Picture Book Walk (\$1,200)**
 - The Sensory Picture Book Walk for the entire student population at Escambia Westgate will be an innovative way to meet many of students' complex sensory needs, while also providing them educational activity. The multisensory component of this program will maximize the participation and engagement of our students with unique learning needs. To create this program, laminated pages from a picture book would be attached to signposts. The signposts would be placed along a winding path through our sensory garden at Westgate. As the students complete one page, they can move through the garden on to the next page of the story. The display book will be updated 3 to 4 times throughout the year, to provide a new story.
- **Exceptional Student Education Department – Deaf and Hard of Hearing (\$1,750)** – The grant will allow for the purchase of a program that contains activities for structured lessons, suggestions for practicing skills in a classroom or therapy session and pages to encourage parents to practice skills at home. It will be used to help children develop auditory skills even if they have low language skills, and is designed to lay the foundation for developing auditory skills with children aged two to 12 with cochlear implants and/or hearing aids.
- **Plew Elementary School – Hands on Learning (\$600)** – The program will help students build math and literacy proficiency in a challenging, rewarding way, by providing independent practice and for use in small groups, rotations, centers, and stations. It's an engaging, screen-free alternative to traditional skills practice. The self-checking answer system creates a safe learning environment that increases student confidence.
- **Shalimar Elementary School – BOOM CARDS (\$600)** - With this program the school can select lessons and practice activities that match the curriculum the teacher is currently teaching. Students are able to access the learning materials on iPads at school, and on computers or iPads at home. It allows the students to receive relevant, interactive, highly-engaging instruction and practice opportunities that provide immediate feedback and a chance to self-correct. It eliminates the need to make thousands of photocopies in order for students to complete their "morning work" activities.
- **Shoal River Middle School – Chess Club (\$500)** - The Chess Club at Shoal River was created this year and was funded by the teacher. With this grant, the school can purchase higher quality chess boards, clocks and other supplies for the team to be able to learn and practice the game.
- **West Florida High School – Escambia County Living Shorelines Program (\$2,000)** - This coastal habitat restoration project is a collaboration between West Florida High School and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP). Marine Science students are teaming up with the Agricultural Sciences Academy to multiply and propagate emergent vegetation for planting in

environmentally sensitive shoreline areas along the Gulf Coast. The partnership between FDEP and WFHS began as a program to engage youth of our area in making a positive environmental impact through mitigating shoreline erosion, creating habitat for marine life, and filtering out pollution. Through this grant students will: 1) Develop an understanding of shoreline ecology 2) Successfully propagate three species of emergent halophyte plants and, 3) Participate in a shoreline restoration planting.

In addition to the Innovation in Education grants, Cox Charities offers Community Investment grants to 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations. This grant application will open in August 2022. For more information about Cox Charities, visit www.CoxCharitiesSER.org.

About Cox Communications

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