

The holiday lights that illuminate Bedford walkways also enlighten the learning in Bedford elementary schools.



The Bedford Minuteman Company Memorial Scholarship Trust has made its fourth annual financial donation to the Bedford schools for the purchase of curricular materials in support of American studies. The gift is funded by the sale of “luminarias”—candles anchored in small bags of sand that traditionally brighten town and private property on Christmas Eve.

The gift of \$4,000 was accepted by Superintendent of Schools Philip Conrad at the School Committee’s most recent meeting.

Paul Ciaccia, a longtime Bedford Minuteman who coordinates the fundraising for the Scholarship Trust, said that this year is the largest donation the company has made. And, he added, every luminaria kit was sold.

For many years the Minuteman Company earmarked the proceeds to fund a scholarship for a graduating high school senior. Now, the gift benefits “a broader group of students, not one or two, but hundreds of kids,” Ciaccia observed.

The Scholarship Trust felt it appropriate to bolster the curriculum with books and other materials that encompass American history, government, civil and human rights, and the “American experience,” Ciaccia said.

His point person in the schools is Andrea Salipante, curriculum coordinator for English language arts in the elementary grades. “We leave it up to Andrea. She spearheads it from the schools’ point of view,” said Ciaccia. “We met with her five years ago and told her what we wanted to do.”

In a letter of acknowledgment to the Minutemen, Salipante wrote that the funds will help Davis and Lane Schools “supplement our instructional bookrooms, as well as build our mentor text libraries.”

Some of the funds will be used to purchase replacements since, in response to the extended remote learning period for many students last school year, students were allowed to take the material home “to practice reading skills, build background knowledge, as well as share books for families to enjoy together,” Salipante pointed out.

Several of the publications, focusing on the Constitution, the U.S. flag, and other foundational documents and practices, are part of the Smithsonian Institute’s Little Explorer series. Other booklets, like “We Have Different Cultures,” are under an umbrella called “Understanding Citizenship.” Stories about colonial times include some that profile women.

There are even a few apparently tailored to young readers that need a special incentive. “The Dreadful, Smelly Colonies,” for example, provides details about daily colonial life. Other volumes focus on more mainstream aspects of residential life around the world.

“It’s really quite encouraging to see teachers use them in class,” Ciaccia commented. He added that the Scholarship Trust hopes the program can soon be expanded into the middle school grades.

The first donation was \$3,000, Ciaccia reported. This year, he said, Chip-In Farm sold all 144 kits in its supply. Ciaccia handled the rest of the sales; he noted that realtor Suzanne Koller again purchased luminarias for her recent Bedford clients.