

Austin Foundation sets lofty fundraising goals

By Talia Tirella For The Crier | Posted: Tuesday, August 26, 2014 5:30 am

The Austin Elementary Eagle Foundation is starting its second year of fundraising expecting 100 percent participation from parents, staff and sponsors. Their goal this year is \$185,000, to be used for a STEM program and other projects.

Eagle Foundation President Kelley Patilla spoke with The Crier about the fundraising process and the addition of a STEM program to Austin Elementary.

“[This year] we are fundraising specifically for STEM certification and for paraprofessionals to come in and help the staff on a daily basis,” said Patilla.

Patilla said that last year, there was 100 percent participation from staff members, but not parents. She said that this year, they hope to reach 100 percent participation from all fundraising sources. Thus far, the foundation has an additional \$82,000 raised through family donations as well as public and private grants to help them reach their final goal.

“We have [already] fundraised from parent pledges. I believe that we have been successful when reaching out to parents. We ask them what they feel is the most important thing to raise money for, we give them information, listen to what they say, set goals and listen to the administration. So far, this has been successful when it comes to getting parents to donate or come to foundation for the first time.”

Another incentive for parent donations is the school’s mission to become a STEM certified institution. “Working towards STEM certification will continue to allow students a more diverse educational experience,” said Patilla. “After we get there, there will still be a need for funding because we will have a need for growth and for enhancements to the program.”

Patilla said that the funds from this year’s fundraising will mostly support the STEM program, a newly hired technology teacher and a full time STEM coordinator. Another part of the funds will be used for the PTA organization, and yet another part used to fund paraprofessionals, or teachers’ aides, used on a daily basis for classroom help.

Other schools in DeKalb County have achieved STEM certification, including Henderson Mill Elementary School and Hightower Elementary School. Patilla said that in the immediate area near Austin, Montgomery Elementary has a foundation and is also working towards STEM certification. She also said that several schools in DeKalb have fundraising foundations, but that she is “unsure about whether they are working towards STEM certification or not.”

For more information about the Eagle Foundation, visit austinelementary.com.