

September 2025

# FOUNDATION NEWS



Partnering with the community to enhance educational opportunities for Durand Area Schools students.

## WINNER, WINNER, CHICKEN DINNER



On a beautiful July day, the aroma of grilling chicken filled the air. Dozens of volunteers were called to action. The Durand Annual Chicken Barbeque was underway. It was the kind of event that founders of Durand Educational Foundation envisioned. The BBQ met the mission of DEF in every way: it engaged community partners; it raised essential funding and it would provide programs and activities for Durand kids that tax dollars were not able to fund. It was a winner.

The mission of **Durand Educational Foundation** is to partner with the community to enhance educational opportunities for Durand Area School students.

The annual Durand Chicken Barbeque began in 2002 and has taken place every year since, except during Covid-19. The **Durand Eagles Club** hosts the BBQ on their spacious grounds combining forces with **Durand Rotary, VFW, Lions Club** and **Chamber of Commerce**. Each organization plays a special role in the planning and preparation of the meal that feeds approximately six hundred guests. Volunteers handle all aspect of the event, from publicity and shopping to clean-up, making it one of the best orchestrated collaborative fundraisers in the area.

For example, the **Durand VFW** and **VFW Auxiliary** prepare baked potatoes in their kitchen which is about a mile away from the BBQ grounds. Starting at 8am, the volunteers begin the process of baking over 600 Idaho spuds in their commercial oven. The potatoes are transported to the BBQ site in insulated containers throughout the afternoon so every potato is perfectly baked at serving time.

The **Lions Club** grill masters are in charge of the chicken. They prepare the huge charcoal grills early in the day and proceed to cook between 900-1,000 pounds of chicken. **Kent Edwards** has been in charge of the grilling for 22 years.

Each year the proceeds from the BBQ are given to an organization or are directed to a local project. Each of the organizations involved in the event take turns selecting the recipient for the funds that are raised. **Durand Eagles Club** selected the Educational Foundation to be the 2025 recipient. A check in the amount of \$7,000 from the 2025 Chicken Barbeque was presented to Durand Educational Foundation Board members at a recent street concert in downtown Durand.

**“This is a great unifying force that combines several key service organizations, and their members, for the common goal of benefitting the people of the Durand community.”**

**– Kent Edwards**

**Jan Harper**, Chair of Durand Education said, “DEF will use the money raised at the BBQ to support programs and activities for Durand students including field trips, special learning activities, summer sports camps and other enhancements that do not fit within the district budget.”

**When it comes to Winner, Winner, Chicken Dinner, it is students at Durand Area Schools that are the ultimate winners. A list projects funded during the 2024-25 school year can be found on page 2.**

## HOW FOUNDATION GRANTS WORK

The Durand Educational Foundation Board has the responsibility of ensuring that students receive maximum benefit of donations. Any teacher, coach or volunteer that works with Durand students may apply for funding. It has been the practice that the entire Board reviews applications and makes all decisions concerning funding. Follow Grants in Action online at [www.DurandEducationFoundation.org](http://www.DurandEducationFoundation.org) for grant details and for the latest funding news.

## SCHOOL YEAR 2024-25 GRANTS AWARDED

- Set of 100 “Who Was” books, Grades 2-5, Robert Kerr School
- Magnetic Board Trays, Kindergarten, Bertha Neal
- Large Collaborative Whiteboards, Middle School
- Meadowbrook Theater Trip, “A Christmas Carol,” Middle School
- Basketball Shooting Machine, High School/Middle School Basketball
- Girls Varsity Basketball Camp\*
- Girls Volleyball Camp\*
- ABC and Math White Boards, Kindergarten, Bertha Neal
- Boys Varsity Basketball Summer Camp \*\*
- Athletic Speed Training, Varsity Sports \* & \*\*
- Testing Day Snacks, Robert Kerr School, Middle School & High School
- Rolling White Boards, Robert Kerr
- Theatre Props & Licensing Fee, High School
- Knitflix After School, Middle School
- Digital Flocabulary Subscription, Robert Kerr
- Shopping Field Trip, Personal Finance Class, High School
- Holocaust Museum Trip, Grade 10, High School
- Blanket Making Christmas Project, High School
- DHS Athletic Hall of Fame Event,\*\* High School
- Robotics Competitive Season, High School
- Holocaust Museum Trip, Grade 8, Middle School
- “Cookies & College Apps” Expenses
- Positive Behavior Rewards - PBIS, Middle School
- Positive Behavior Rewards - PBIS, High School
- Rocket Math, Robert Kerr

\*Funded by Marjorie Smith Fund

\*\*Funded by Jim Fuller Fund

\*\*\*Funded by Doris Kiacz Fund



*The first high school play performed on the new stage was the murder mystery comedy, “Clue.”*

## HIGH SCHOOL DRAMA PROGRAM HITS THE STAGE

The Durand High School drama program received a major boost during the 2024-25 school year when the Performing Arts Center (PAC), which is attached to the high school, was completed and deemed ready for use. The building has a plush 350 seat auditorium, band and choir rooms and other facilities that support the performing arts.

Prior to the opening of the PAC, theatre performances were held in the 1960’s era cafetorium, which was basically a lunchroom with a stage. While the room provided flexibility, it was a challenge for drama programs. There was no space for storage and the stage area was also used as a classroom, limiting when and how it could be used for plays. But, that all changed.

The first high school play performed on the new stage was the murder mystery comedy, “Clue,” which opened on May 23, 2025. High School English teacher Phil Partlo served as director, coach and mentor to the actors and crew members. Partlo said, “The first performance in the PAC was an experience that the students and I will never forget. The beautiful space was filled with laughter and enthusiasm of a great audience. Thank you to our fantastic community.”

The Educational Foundation helped fund student scripts and royalties for the play. **Mr. Partlo** and several of his drama students participated in Trivia Night, a fundraiser for the Foundation.

**Roger Zick**, Treasurer of DEF, said, “It was great to be able to help fund the first play in our new Performing Arts Center. It was even more wonderful to have Mr. Partlo and students show their appreciation by attending the DEF activity.”

## DONATIONS WILL AGAIN BE MATCHED



A Durand graduate will match incoming donations up to \$15,000 that are either pledged or received by December 31, 2025. Donations can be made online at [DurandEducationFoundation.org](http://DurandEducationFoundation.org) or by using the envelope enclosed in this newsletter. If you would like to make a pledge to be fulfilled in early 2026, please return the completed envelope indicating your pledge amount so your donation will be matched.

## 2025 DURAND DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI

**Brenda Lovegrove Lepisto, Class of 1973, and Brad Diller, Class of 1974, have been selected as this year's recipients of the Distinguished Alumni Award by the Durand Educational Foundation.**



**Brenda Lovegrove Lepisto** is being cited for her career advancement and academic excellence. She is a licensed psychologist at Hurley Medical Center, an adjunct professor at Michigan State University, Director of Psychosocial Communication at MSU, and Program Director of Behavioral Health in the College of Osteopathic Medicine at MSU.

She earned a bachelor's degree in psychology, a master's degree in clinical psychology, and a doctorate in clinical psychology, all from Central Michigan University. She completed a post-doctoral fellowship in child clinical psychology through Michigan State University and Hurley Medical Center. She has been a leader in internal committees at McLaren Greater Lansing and Hurley and has served on many state and national committees for the American Academy for Healthcare Communication.

Lepisto is a published researcher and presenter at the local, state, national, and international level, including numerous articles, workshops, conferences, and video web productions. She has received numerous awards from the American Academy of Psychotherapists and CMU, and she was designated Educator of the Year in 2023 by McLaren Greater Lansing.



**Brad Diller's** award is for career achievement and dedicated service. He taught for 10 years in K-12 special education and spent 29 years in school administration, most recently as principal of Kelly Walsh High School in Casper, Wyo. He also coached middle and high school football, basketball, track, and wrestling as well as youth sports in Casper and for the Special Olympics.

He received a bachelor's degree in special education from Northern Michigan University and a master's degree in educational leadership from the University of Wyoming.

Diller has directed projects to benefit the Humane Society, American Cancer Society, and Make-a-Wish Foundation. He has served on several boards, including the Wyoming Congressional Award and the Child Development Center, and started the annual Functional Life Skills Reunion for special needs students and their teachers. He is known for his commitment to educational excellence for all students, along with his positive attitude, sense of humor, and dedication to service as a fair and quality leader. He continues to support education, and volunteers at schools during his retirement.

A reception and program honoring the recipients was held at Durand Union Station in August.

**Nominations for 2026 awardees can be made any time prior May 30, 2026. A nomination form can be found on the Durand Educational Foundation website on the Alumni page or a form can be requested by emailing [janharper@charter.net](mailto:janharper@charter.net).**

# FOUNDATION DONORS

(Gifts received July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025)

**Thank you to our donors.** If we missed you, we apologize. Please contact us immediately at [durandeducationfdn@gmail.com](mailto:durandeducationfdn@gmail.com) so we can add your name to the list of people who generously support education in Durand.

Norm & Rachel Abdella  
Acker Insurance Agency, Inc.  
Linda Ackley-Eaker  
Laura Alderman  
Pam Allen  
Fred Anderson  
Jan & Carol Amsterburg  
Lyn Behnke  
Christine Bell  
Sue Bentley  
Elizabeth Bennett  
Margie Betz  
Chuck & Mary Ann Birch  
Blackbaud Giving Fund  
Blackmore Rowe Insurance  
Matt & Sandy Blight  
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John & Louise Bombyk  
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Diane Dimkoff  
Barbara Dingman  
& Michael Dingman  
Door Mart, LLC  
D-Railed Bar and Grill  
Jacob & Veronica Drenovsky  
Rebecca Drenovsky  
Richard M Drenovsky  
Durand Alumni Reunion  
Diana Durling  
Kent & Terry Edwards  
Nancy A. Ellwood  
Jim Fallis  
Nancy Fallis  
Peter & Suzanne Fortunato  
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James Fuller  
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Michael & Linda Zusack

## Memorial Donations

Nancy Alacheff  
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Michael Bentley  
Winnie Bentley  
Jack Bollinger  
Melvin R. Clark  
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Richard Craven  
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Laurie Dodge Fischer  
Mary E. Francis  
Janice June Hoshal  
Scott Hoshal  
Douglas M Johnson '76  
RJ & Margaret Johnson  
Geraldine Jones  
William Jones  
Wanda Lamphere  
Duncan McKay  
Abigail Merrell  
Richard & Annabelle Morin

Carlotta Pelton  
Paul & Bonnie Rearick  
Sharon Rearick  
Al Rowe  
Jonathan Simons  
William "Bill" Smith, "63"  
Jim Weinrich  
Ramon Wooton

## Honorary Donations

Susan Brown  
Nancy Ellwood  
Patricia LeRoy  
Douglas Shook  
Lorrie Sumpter & Eric Sumpter  
The Roger & Ann Zick Family  
Steven Zusack

## DURAND EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT

July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025

### Beginning balances, July 1, 2024

General checking:	\$21,132
Savings (Smith & Fuller funds)	\$7,461
Endowed amount at SCF*	\$303,073
Spendable account at SCF	\$82,415

\*Shiawassee Community Foundation (SCF)

### Income:

Matching fund donation	\$15,000
Other cash donations	\$46,999
Total cash donations	\$61,999
Fundraising net earnings	\$3,505
Investment earnings at SCF	\$13,793

### Expenses:

Grants issued to staff	\$22,793
Fees (Website, E-filing, etc.)	\$1,702
Supplies, printing, postage	\$1,344

### End of year balances, June 30, 2025

General checking & Money Mkt.	\$12,626
Special MMkt. (Smith & Fuller funds)	\$1,116
Endowed amount at SCF	\$360,923
Spendable account at SCF	\$87,458