

Avon Education Foundation Looks to Teach, Enrich Entire Community

By Amanda Stone

AVON-BY-THE-SEA — Learning is not just for the students of Avon, but the community at large and the Avon-by-the-Sea Education Foundation wants to make sure it stays that way.

The foundation, created in January 2011, began as a grassroots movement by local residents who wanted everyone living in the area to have the chance to learn and grow — not just students attending Avon Elementary School.



Tess Nielsen, president of the Avon-by-the-Sea Education Foundation, directs Fred Adams how to browse through his email online during a recent computer seminar hosted by the foundation.

Photo by AMANDA STONE, STAR NEWS GROUP

“We felt a need to support education in Avon through a unique, private-funding source,” said foundation president Tess Nielsen. The non-profit’s mission is to raise money and secure grants to support education, as well as enrichment programs for both students and adults in the community. “Our overall mission is to serve the educational needs of a diverse population, not only those of Avon Elementary,” Ms. Nielsen said.

Through annual appeals and donations, the foundation has found financial success to, in return, help others learn. Such funding has already come from local citizens, Goldman-Sachs Gives, PNC Bank and FJC Corporation, according to Ms. Nielsen. A plaque, donning the sponsors names, is expected to be placed inside the Avon Municipal Complex.

The funds have already gone a long way. Within the school, the foundation has helped raise money through grants for teachers to use in their classrooms. For the community, the foundation has already hosted adult digital media seminars, free for senior citizens who reside in Avon.

Through the classes, residents were guided on internet safety, file management, email and photo sharing among other aspects. That initiative proved successful, as nearly two dozen residents utilized the seminar.

Fred Adams, of Avon, said the seminar was “great” and “very informative” to him. “I would really like to learn a little bit more about computers,” Mr. Adams said. After watching his grandson Pat, 14, work on the computer, Mr. Adams said he became interested in learning more. “I have a computer, I just don’t use it,” Mr. Adams said. “I feel like a dinosaur.” Through the seminar, though, Mr. Adams was able to learn more about the technology that he watches his grandchildren use every day.

It is seminars like these that the foundation would like to continue offering to the community. “We’re looking to educate all of the community,” Ms. Nielsen said. In or out of school, she said, the foundation aims to help those of all ages. “This will support Avon Elementary School’s excellence in academics as well as provide a venue for continued education,” Ms. Nielsen said. The foundation, now well into its second year of existence, has received positive feedback from the community.

“A lot of people are excited about what we’re doing,” Ms. Nielsen said. What helps make the foundation successful, she said, is the wide range of people who serve on the board. “We’re all very enthusiastic about education,” Ms. Nielsen said, noting board members hold jobs in law, business, retail and cultural arts.

Though a final plan has yet to be scheduled, the foundation is looking to host an “eloquent” fundraiser to be held this winter season in order to pay for more seminars and programs in the borough, according to Ms. Nielsen.

An annual appeal will also be sent out to the community later this summer. All donations, small or large, will go a long way in helping others learn, she added. “It is very much appreciated,” Ms. Nielsen said.

To learn more about the Avon-by-the-Sea Education Foundation or to donate, visit its website at www.avonbytheseafoundation.org.

For any questions about the foundation, email info@avonbytheseafoundation.org.