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ECGRA Matches \$34,680 in Private Gifts to Fairview, Fort LeBoeuf, Girard, and Iroquois School District Foundations

EMBARGOED UNTIL DECEMBER 10, 2015 AT 10 A.M. – Erie, PA – In February, the Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority challenged Erie County’s public school district foundations to grow their endowments by \$5 per student. Today, ECGRA announced that four of those foundations met their fundraising goals. ECGRA matched every eligible dollar totaling \$34,680.

School District Foundation	No. of students	Eligible match at \$5/student	Total raised during Challenge
Fairview School Foundation	1,670	\$8,350	\$8,350
Fort LeBoeuf School District Foundation	2,131	\$10,655	\$11,579
Girard School District Foundation	1,735	\$8,675	\$11,100
Iroquois School District Foundation	1,400	\$7,000	\$7,000

Erie County’s public schools serve more than 40,200 students in 13 districts: Corry Area, Erie City, Fairview, Fort LeBoeuf, General McLane, Girard, Harborcreek, Iroquois, Millcreek, North East, Northwestern, Union City, and Wattsburg. Each of those districts has its own foundation – all nonprofit, autonomous, community-supported organizations – responsible for raising and distributing money so districts can afford initiatives not covered by local, state, and federal funding.

ECGRA’s Challenge comes alongside the foundations with the goals of strengthening public schools and their adjoining neighborhoods, fostering development in Erie’s future workforce, and abating poverty.

ECGRA Executive Director Perry Wood said, “It is not a surprise – especially during a budget

stalemate – that public schools are pressed on every day to do more with fewer resources. We proudly partner with our public school districts to create educated, engaged, employable citizens for the health and growth of the region."

Since early 2014, ECGRA representatives have been convening foundation leaders to build their organizational and fundraising capacity.

Wood added, "Most of the foundations are volunteer-led and community-supported. We would have done the foundations a disservice had we offered the matching grant without providing resources to help them achieve their goal."



Melanie Vadzemnieks, administrator and development officer for Fairview School Foundation, explained Thursday that her organization met their \$8,350 goal using strategies laid out in ECGRA-provided workshops and "Double is More" ad campaign.

The Fairview School Foundation offers \$1,000 service scholarships to graduating seniors and \$3,500 in mini-grants to teachers. Fairview STEM Coordinator Ryan Bookhammer joined Vadzemnieks at the podium Thursday to share how he tapped into the mini-grants for technology improvements and to create corresponding curriculum.

Dennis Fortin, president of the Fort LeBoeuf School District Foundation, also spoke Thursday. The Challenge motivated his volunteer-driven foundation to create a fundraising gala, which will be hosted for years to come. The foundation fundraised nearly \$1,000 in excess of its matching grant total and will use funds to provide scholarships to graduating seniors seeking technical education for trade occupations.



Foundations participating in The Challenge can receive matching funds for dollars raised up to \$5 per student through December 31, 2016. Anyone interested in donating to a public school district foundation can visit www.ECGRA.org, which details how foundations intend to invest funds and provides contact information for each foundation in order to make a gift.

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An impact investor, ECGRA's mission is to elevate Erie County by galvanizing nonprofits toward economic and community development. Since February 2008, ECGRA has invested more than \$35 million in Erie County thanks to the pioneering leadership of members of the ECGRA board of directors and staff. Learn more at ECGRA.org or call 814-897-2690.

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