

High Peaks Education Foundation

Fall 2007 Newsletter



HPEF's mission is to ensure the long-term survival and health of Keene Central School.

This newsletter is our progress report to the community.

HPEF is run by a volunteer board of trustees, both full and part-time residents. Sam Fisk is current president. Cynthia Johnston and Board of Education Vice President Kathy Smith are non-voting members. Funding for our work comes from charitable (and tax deductible) gifts from community members who understand the importance of a vibrant school to our town.

Plotting a Bright Future for KCS

HPEF was a major advocate of the School Enhancement Task Force, which met during 2005-2006. In fact, two members of our board, Jim Herman and Dave Mason, ran the meetings and coordinated the presentation of the concluding report. Last December, they worked with the Board of Education to turn that report into a strategic plan to preserve the long-term health and viability of KCS.

The KCS plan calls for two main areas of effort, each with specific ideas for development:

- recruiting more students
- enhancing the quality

KCS Administration and the Board of Education review progress on the plan regularly, and we are pleased with strides already made.

New Website for KCS

Having a top-notch website can make a world of difference in recruiting new students, as well as in keeping current parents up-to-date on school activities. HPEF hired a designer, Stephanie Pfaff, who engaged all part of the school to create a new website (KeeneCentralSchool.org) that reflects its unique attributes and advantages. The excellent results are in, or, rather, on the Internet. Stephanie will continue as the guardian of the website, keeping it current. Please visit the site and tell us what you think.

Location, Location, Location

We want our school be the best it can be. We also hope that it will create a unique identity for itself that will attract new families to our town. Our wilderness setting—the mountains, river and valley—is our town's most compelling asset. Why not take advantage of our location?

Last year, HPEF hired local resident and teacher Katherine Brown to create a curriculum for grades K-6 that integrates science, literature and social awareness to strengthen the sense of place that KCS students experience. Early response from the teachers has been very positive.

Katherine, who has since left to teach in Canton, also introduced KCS to Four Winds, a nature institute in Vermont, which will help further enhance the science curriculum, using hands-on, outdoor exploration of the natural world. Community volunteers will help implement the program, under the direction of an HPEF-paid coordinator, Angie Cook (whose son Jacob is in first grade).

HPEF Funds Grow Well at Adirondack Community Trust

The Adirondack Community Trust (ACT) in Lake Placid manages our funds. ACT manages over \$22 million for more than 100 regional not-for-profit organizations. Last year, they achieved a 16% return.

High-Speed Internet for All

The most prominent of our follow-up activities from the KCS strategic plan is the effort to improve and expand broadband (i.e., high speed) Internet access for the whole town. The premise is that access to high quality, broadband Internet service is essential to Keene's future economic and social health. Families in today's world need it, especially those who rely on Internet work for income. Our children need to be educated in how to use the Internet for research, education, communication, and personal productivity. Keene Valley Video, Inc. (KVVI), the sole local provider, reaches about two-thirds of year-round homes and one-third of seasonal homes. But its cable plant was badly in need of refurbishing. After months of analysis, the volunteer-led Broadband Project team concluded that the best option is to refurbish, then expand, the existing cable system for high-speed Internet and television.

Donors within the community have given HPEF over \$100,000 toward the \$500,000 project goal. We loaned a portion to KVVI with a payback plan that secures a future source of funds for other HPEF projects.

KVVI has already replaced deteriorated cable and deployed a lot more fiber optic cable, increasing the capacity of the network. We're working to connect Keene with Charter Communications in Upper Jay to supply new programming and better connectivity to the rest of the Internet. Our next step: extensions for Spruce and East Hills.

Thanks to the hard work of HPEF Vice President Charity Marlatt and Town Supervisor Bill Ferebee, we've applied for a grant through Senator Betty Little for more project support.

Mentors Signed Up for Grades 5, 6

Now in its third year, the mentoring program matches caring adult volunteers from the community with grade 5 and 6 students who request mentors. The demand for mentors increases each year, as students realize the benefits of a trusted adult friend, who can sympathize and encourage but is not a relative or a teacher. HPEF provides funding for the coordinator-- Alice Boutte this year.

HPEF to Sponsor Trip to Spain

HPEF is especially enthusiastic about funding programs that broaden horizons for our students by introducing them to other cultures, languages and geography. We are pleased to be an early sponsor of a multi-age trip (grades 9-11) to Spain in 2009. The trip will take 16 students abroad for 10 days.

Better Auditorium Lighting

This year, HPEF joined with the school and the George Bright estate to install a new lighting system in the auditorium, which will enhance the effectiveness and professionalism of stage presentations.



HPEF's mission is to ensure the long-term survival and health of the Keene Central School as a critical institution in our town. HPEF is committed to supporting the implementation of the KCS Strategic Plan, which covers both growth in student population through recruiting, and enrichment of educational programs for teachers and students of KCS. HPEF is a source of ideas, expertise, funding, connections and volunteers that augments the efforts of KCS administration and teachers, the Board of Education, and the Parent Teacher Association. HPEF focuses on researching feasible alternatives, disseminating accurate and clear information, and launching new initiatives. HPEF is a source of project-specific seed funds, recruits and organizes volunteers for new initiatives, and is an advocate for KCS in the community.