

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SULLIVAN COUNTY SCHOOLS RECEIVE \$48,000 IN MINI GRANTS

Schools in Sullivan County have received \$48,000 in mini grants from Utrust. Sullivan County teachers were invited to submit requests for up to \$4800 each for whatever project they needed most in order to do their jobs better. To apply for the grants, teachers completed an online request form on the Utrust website. Sixty-one applications were completed: 23 from elementary schools; 23 from high schools; and 15 from middle schools. Some applications were from more than one teacher and some included more than one project on the same application.

A Utrust Committee rated each grant request using five criteria: potential for teaching/learning; number of students or staff benefitted; recurring benefit; innovation/creativity; and critical need. The idea was to fund the 10 projects with the highest ratings. According to Dr. Dan Tollett, Utrust Administrator, "There were too many excellent projects that deserved to be funded. Twenty projects were so outstanding that they received near perfect scores. The committee took the 20 projects with the highest scores and randomly drew ten of them for funding."

The teachers whose projects were funded are:

- Kristin Hale, Missy Byrd, Gina Sandridge and Rachel Rush, first grade teachers at Bluff City Elementary School, to purchase computers and headsets to be used with an individualized reading software program to increase students reading skills.
- Rhonda McConnell, third grade math teacher at Miller Perry Elementary School, to purchase computers to incorporate project based learning into the classroom on a daily basis.
- Gloria Watson a fourth grade teacher at Emmett Elementary School to purchase Watson's Wii Math to make a learning math fun and memorable.
- Julie Conklin, Special Education Department Chair at Sullivan Central High School, to buy computers to replace computers no longer in working condition to allow Special Education students to participate in reading remediation and progress monitoring.
- Sherry Lilly, Library Media Specialist at Bluff City Middle School, to help the library become a Libratory, a place where students can not only learn from print materials but also interact with hands-on activities which foster learning in science and technology.
- Mandi Aubrey, Library Media Specialist at Holston Valley Middle School, to purchase a set of iPad Minis and NEARPOD Technology to allow the librarian and teachers to preplan lessons that include interactive quizzes, spontaneous activity, virtual field trips and receive real-time feedback about the students' progress.
- Teresa Cassel, Health Sciences CTE Teacher at Sullivan East High School, to provide matching funds to replace outdated nonworking computers and help convert to a technology-based course of study.
- Lori Hill, a math educator at Sullivan Central High School, to purchase computers and software to allow students at all levels of high school math to interact with significant math principles as they simulate real world scenarios.
- Ruth Leonard, physics teacher at Sullivan South High School, to purchase technology required to implement a modeling approach for physical science, physics and advanced placement physics.

- \$4717 to Brandon Ferrell, Criminal Justice Teacher at Sullivan North High School, to purchase a Digital Forensic Evidence Examination Station.

"It broke our hearts not to be submitted by Sullivan teachers did not make "pie-single one was for something that would significantly impact the quality of educational experiences provided for their students." Tollett continued, "We funded \$48,000 and we don't live in Sullivan County. We would like to see the Sullivan County Commission fund the \$277,000 in requests that we were unable to fund."

Evelyn Rafalowski, Superintendent of Sullivan County Schools requested that Utrust allow individual teachers to apply for something on their wish list. Rafalowski said, "We deeply appreciate Utrust making these mini grants available to our schools. We are very fortunate to find a means of funding some of the technology our teachers desperately need to improve the learning experiences for their students.

Tollett said, "Our intent at Utrust is to provide funds through our mini-grant program to fund small projects that will make a big difference. We believe each of these projects will make a big difference to students and staff in Sullivan County. We appreciate the excellent job that teachers did in submitting their requests and we are glad to be a part of such worthy projects."

Utrust is an organization of school boards that assists school systems in Tennessee in recognizing, supporting and appreciating school employees. It sponsors the Utrust School Employee Appreciation Program that seeks to help students express appreciation to people who make their lives better each day.

Sullivan County is one of 52 school systems in Tennessee to receive Utrust mini-grants this year totaling more than \$900,000 to improve educational opportunities for students.

Charles Bridwell, former school board chairman of Sullivan County Board of Education, is a former chairman of the Utrust Board of Trustees. He helped to establish investment policies that enabled Utrust to award mini grants to schools. David Jones, a Hancock County school board member, is current Chairman of the Utrust Board.

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Contact

Kristi Coleman
Utrust Director of Finance and Administration
1525 Hunt Club Blvd., suite 300
Gallatin, Tennessee 37066
kcoleman@utrust.com
615-714-4190

Evelyn Rafalowski, Superintendent
Sullivan County Schools
P.O. Box 306
Blountville, TN 37617
evelyn.rafalowski@sullivank12.net
423-354-1000