

# GoodNews



GoodNews Summer 2016 (Excerpted from page 7)

## Grants in Action

Grants in Action recognizes the results of notable grant awards, whether large or small, and the significant impact they have on strengthening Greater Dayton and beyond.

### Program Builds Stories, One LEGO® at a Time



Northridge City Schools students show off their LEGO StoryStarter creations.

Writing can be a frustrating process, particularly for young students with a disability. When Janelle Vargo, intervention specialist for Northridge City Schools, discovered an interactive LEGO-building tool that inspires children to write, she knew it would be a hit with her first and second graders.

Janelle was able to purchase the LEGO Education StoryStarter materials and software for her classroom, thanks to a \$1,015 grant from The Northridge Polar Bear Foundation Fund of The Dayton Foundation. The fund has received substantial financial support and guidance from the Northridge Optimist Club.

“Writing is one of the most difficult tasks for students to learn and master,” she said. “I cannot count the number of crumpled and

ripped papers created by frustrated erasers I have had in my years of teaching. Thanks to the LEGO StoryStarter, no one was frustrated, because they were having fun!”

The program helps children bring their stories to life by constructing scenes using the building bricks and mini-figures, then capturing the scene in writing. With the visual story scene in front of them, students can more closely focus on writing elements, such as spelling and story structure.

“A LEGO creation is a picture of a student’s creative thoughts and ideas,” Janelle Vargo said. “They see the beginning, middle and end of the stories created in their minds, enabling them to work harder on those difficult mechanics.”

The program was a success. One student, who had previously thrown fits during writing exercises, asked to work on his paper during recess. He completed it without complaint, despite leaving the LEGOs inside. Also, because both general education students and students who are offered intervention services participated, the program fostered an inclusive learning environment for all.

“We are so thankful for the grant from The Northridge Polar Bear Foundation Fund for the LEGO StoryStarter, which brings together our students to collaborate on a common project,” Janelle Vargo said. “We couldn’t have done it without this support!”

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– Janelle Vargo,  
intervention specialist,  
Northridge City Schools