

Groups Accept \$21,000 in Grants Latest Distribution Brings Total to nearly \$197,000 since 2000

1/12/12, by Ed Husar, Quincy Herald-Whig Staff Writer

The Community Foundation of the Quincy Area distributed more than \$21,000 in grants Thursday morning to 13 organizations that benefit children in the Quincy area.

The money came from the Samantha Otte Youth Opportunity Fund, established in the name of a 10-year-old Quincy girl who died in March 2000 after a liver transplant necessitated by cystic fibrosis.

Samantha, the daughter of Chuck and June Otte, has not been forgotten. In the wake of her passing, Samantha's family and friends created something positive in her honor by forming the Sammy Fund, a program through which about 100 volunteers work to raise money to benefit other children. The chief source of revenue is the Sammy Fund event, held each October since 2000.

Last year, the Sammy Fund event raised about \$37,000 from activities that included a run/walk, a golf tournament, an auction and a craft sale. Other donations were made directly to the Sammy Fund over the course of the year.

Thursday morning a significant portion of that revenue was distributed in Samantha's memory to the 13 organizations. The checks were distributed through the Samantha Otte Youth Opportunity Fund, which was established in September 2000 with the Community Foundation of the Quincy Area. The foundation manages the account.

Since 2000 the fund has provided 134 grants totaling nearly \$197,000.

"That money has literally impacted thousands and thousands of young people in our community," said Amy Lehenbauer, the community foundation's program coordinator.

This year's checks were distributed during an event at the Salvation Army's Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center at 405 Vermont.

Chuck Otte said he and his wife are grateful for the ongoing support shown for the campaign.

"We've just always been so thankful to everybody in the community – the businesses and the people – for the way they've reached out and donated to help the Sammy Fund over these years. It still amazes us," he said.

"We hope it's helped a lot of kids in the community and done a lot of worthwhile stuff to allow children to expand their opportunities," he added. "It's something that's helped us heal from the loss of Samantha and move on in a positive direction."

Not all the money collected each year is given out as grants. Some is retained by the foundation to help the fund continue to grow for the future. Otte said the fund's balance is now approaching \$300,000.

Combined with the \$197,000 already given out in grants, that means the Sammy Fund has managed to generate just shy of \$500,000 since its inception.

"Every dime of that stays in the Quincy area to help children," June Otte said at today's ceremony.

Another series of Sammy Fund events will be held Oct. 6 – 7. Details will be announced later this year.

Major sponsors of the 2011 Sammy Fund event were County Market, The Quincy Herald-Whig, WGEM, Refreshment Services Pepsi and First Bankers Trust.

Grant recipients:

- The Salvation Army – to purchase music, stringed instruments and supplies for the children’s music program.
- Good News of Christmas – to help the Good News campaign provide gifts to needy families at Christmas.
- Midsummer Art Faire – to assist with the children’s art section at the annual summer event
- Blessings in a Backpack, Inc. – to support the food availability program at Quincy’s Madison and Monroe elementary schools.
- Douglass Community Services, Inc. – to allow additional students to participate in the Kids in Motion summer pre-employment and service learning training program.
- Quincy Family YMCA – for swim lessons for Head Start students from the Early Childhood Education Center.
- John Wood Community College Foundation – to provide tuition waivers for income-eligible children to attend JWCC’s Children’s College
- YWCA of Quincy – to fund leadership and development of the “A Girl Like Me” program for underprivileged girls.
- Girl Scouts of Central Illinois – to provide membership assistance, camperships and outreach programming, including the “Staying Safe” program for at-risk girls.
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of West-Central Illinois – to support one-on-one mentoring relationships in Adams County.
- Quincy Art Center – to help fund the smART Kids art mentoring program in several Adams County schools.
- Two Rivers Council Foundation – to support the Teen Reach program and fund the student awards banquet.
- The Jackson-Lincoln Swimming Complex – to help fund a scholarship program for children and families that can’t afford pool fees.