

By Erich Thurow, Chairman D200 Education Foundation

Many Woodstock residents explain our hometown to people they meet with a question. "Have you ever seen the movie "Groundhog Day"? The film, of course, was shot in Woodstock in 1992. What you may not know is that Columbia Pictures and the producers of the film made a donation that resulted in the formation of the District 200 Education Foundation.

The film group donated hundreds of props and valuable items used in and on the film to District 200. A group of citizens formed the District 200 Education Foundation, and auctioned the donated items resulting in a nest egg that has been used to fund programs to benefit thousands of our students for more than 20 years.

The Foundation, operated by a volunteer board of trustees, organizes events and fundraisers to help add to the initial funds and continue the process of supporting school programs. Each year the Foundation holds a major fundraiser on or around Groundhog Day, and in fall distributes funds to support projects as requested by District 200 staff members. Annually we provide about \$25,000 in what we call "Impact Grants" to support in whole or in part approximately 75 programs. In doing so, we fulfill our motto: Making Things Happen That Ordinarily Would Not.

In the coming months, we will be featuring some of the projects that are being funded by the Foundation this year. In 2011, we began a program to honor an individual each year for his or her long-term commitment and contributions to excellence in education in the district.

To date we have honored former Woodstock High School teacher Bud Swarthout (2011), District 200 Community Service Director Barb Banker(2012), Retired Principal of Greenwood School Bill Schuette (2013) and former Trustee and long-time Foundation volunteer Jim Campion (2014). At our fundraiser event on January 31, we will be honoring our fifth recipient of the "Award of Excellence."

The award is given each year to a District 200 resident, a current or former volunteer, a district employee or retiree or a distinguished graduate of District 200. The Board of Trustees receives nominations for the award each fall including letters of nomination and recommendation and then a committee of citizens, administrators and trustees recommend a recipient to the Board of Trustees and the award is given.

I would like to invite the public to consider nominating qualified individuals to be considered for this year's award. Nomination forms and guidelines are available on the Foundation website at www.d200edfoundation.org. Nomination submissions should include three letters of recommendation as well as a nomination form. Nominations must be turned in to the Foundation by November 21 to be considered for the 2015 award.

The name of the recipient will be announced in December and profiled in this column in February. The Award of Excellence will be presented at this year's Groundhog Day Dinner and Auction on Saturday, January 31, 2015. It will be held at Donley's Village Hall Banquets in Union.