

Teacher Aid To Come Supply Depot To Open In Spring

By Heather Bowser

Last year, home economics teacher Karen Fansler-Ryan spent at least \$1,000 of her own money on items for her classes.

"I'm a food teacher so you know that I spend money out of pocket," she said.

For city schoolteachers like Fansler-Ryan, the Harrisonburg Education Foundation may have a solution.

"It's our hope to have a place where area businesses can donate supplies that they don't need," said Ray Atkinson, executive director for the foundation.

Beginning in April, Atkinson said, the foundation will open a teacher supply depot and collect "unwanted extras" for teachers who need them.

Then, area residents and businesses can donate unwanted inventory so that Fansler-Ryan, and all the other 542 city teachers and staff like her, may not have to dig quite so deep into their pockets.

"This is a golden opportunity," Fansler-Ryan said.

The Depot Beginning

The recent movement for the city's depot began a few months ago when Dr. James Simmons, Ashby Animal Clinic owner, donated the use of his warehouse.

On Saturday, the Harrisonburg High School Key Club began cleaning the building. They plan to begin painting it next week.

Meanwhile, the foundation began collecting supplies and is storing them in some donated space across town.

Atkinson said depot organizers already collected many items for the depot, but the warehouse is a long way from the capacity.

"We'll take anything that is surplus," he said.

Atkinson said the foundation will provide funds for utilities, snow removal and minor upkeep.

In The County

Rockingham County already has a teacher supply depot.

"Our average teacher spends over \$500 a year from their personal accounts on things for their classrooms," said Dick Harper, for Rockingham Educational Foundation. "Our depot has saved the county millions of dollars."

He said businesses like Costco and Lowe's occasionally donate slightly damaged furniture to the depot.

"We've had everything from individuals cleaning out personal libraries who give us books to a bank that was that donated all their office furniture."

Atkinson said he hopes the city's depot will be as successful as the county's.

For now, teachers such as Fansler-Ryan will only have to wait a few more weeks to sink their teeth into some fresh supplies.

How To Give

To donate to the Harrisonburg Teacher Supply Depot, contact Craig Mackail at 434-9916 or cmackail@harrisonburg.k12.va.us.

Contact Heather Bowser at 574-6218 or hbowser@dnronline.com



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