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# Dunham Fund continues financing Challenge for Change winners

**By Stephanie Lulay**

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AURORA — The Dunham Fund has awarded additional funding to two non-profits that received the Fund's Challenge for Change grants in 2009.

The Challenge for Change winners were Aurora University's Institute for Collaboration program to establish the Aurora Mathematics and Science Education System, and Communities in Schools' Community Assessment Project, which aims to develop a comprehensive, centralized data warehousing system for use by local agencies.

This year, the Dunham Fund awarded the Math and Science Education System project a \$250,000 grant with an additional \$150,000 matching award, meaning the project can earn an extra \$1 of funding for every \$2 of outside funding secured.

The fund awarded the community assessment project a \$450,000 grant that is contingent upon Communities in Schools securing additional funding commitments of \$150,000 to ensure the project's sustainability.

Aurora University was awarded \$100,000 and Communities in Schools was awarded \$50,000 in 2009.

## Needs of community

The Challenge for Change winners were tasked with stepping outside of their established program to identify a significant community need and develop a solution to address that need.

The Math and Science Education System's 2009 award was used to explore ways that math and science learning could be advanced in the greater Aurora community. The funding was used to plan a magnet academy, serving third through eighth grades, on the Aurora University campus.

The system plans to have area math

and science teachers teach at the magnet academy and take their knowledge and research back to their home schools, said Sherry Eagle, director of AU's Institute for Collaboration.

"They looked at what the education support system is missing," said Dunham Fund Executive Director Bob Vaughn. "Advanced (math and science) students aren't being challenged in the public school system and their parents were moving somewhere else."

The proposed "mini-IMSA," as Vaughn calls it, would serve students from East Aurora, Indian Prairie, Oswego and West Aurora school districts, and Aurora University students.

The plan this year is to develop a curriculum for the program.

According to Eagle, securing outside funding won't be a problem, as the project has already gained support from national corporations Google and Exelon.

## Helping non-profits

The 2009 award to the Community Assessment Project was used to develop a plan for gathering environmental data that could help many area non-profit agencies and schools secure federal grants, according to Theresa Shoemaker, executive director of Communities in Schools.

The goal of the program is for many area groups to be able to access the information immediately and easily in one database system by December 2011, Shoemaker said.

She said the idea came about when Communities in Schools lost two federal competitive grants last year because the group didn't have the necessary data collected.

"Four years from now, we want the data to still be current, live data," Vaughn said. "It's really needed."