

# Foundation offering \$165,000 for great ideas

## ■ Challenge for Change: Dunham Fund looking for new ways to promote higher achievement

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While plenty of organizations around the Fox Valley are struggling to make ends meet these days, the Dunham Fund has the opposite problem. They're sitting on a pile of money — \$70 million, to be exact — and they're itching to give it away.

So last week, the local foundation gathered hundreds of people together at North Island Center to announce its new plan to share the wealth: Challenge for Change.

The challenge will award \$100,000 to the non-profit group that submits the best proposal for an innovative program, Dunham adviser Ryan Maley

### Challenge for Change

- Competition seeking proposals for an innovative program involving education or other achievements; open to 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations.
- First-place prize is \$100,000, second place is \$50,000 and third place is \$15,000.
- Applications are due by Jan. 15, 2009, and awards will be announced on March 15, 2009.
- A two-day grant-writing workshop will be offered to interested nonprofits in November at North Island Center in Aurora.
- For details or to download an application, visit [www.dunhamfund.org/challenge.html](http://www.dunhamfund.org/challenge.html).

explained.

Second- and third-place winners will take home \$50,000 and \$15,000, respectively.

The awards will be given simply for the proposal, Maley explained, with additional funding to come for the program's implementation. Maley compared the contest to the Ansari X Prize, which offered \$10 million in 2004 to the first nongovernmental group to

send a spacecraft into space twice in two weeks.

With the Challenge for Change, though, he joked, "we don't need you to go into orbit."

Instead, the Dunham Fund is seeking applicants with creative, collaborative ideas, particularly ones that promote education or help people reach new heights of achievement. Those were the goals closest to the heart of



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John C. Dunham, the Aurora businessman and philanthropist who first established the Dunham Fund in 1996.

The Dunham Fund was funded in 2006 according to the terms of Dunham's trust, and the foundation soon began doling out money to worthy causes. Last year, the Dunham Fund provided \$2.5 million in grants, as well as \$100,000 in college scholarships.

Waubensee Community College, one of last year's grant recipients, used the money to start the Dunham Early College Academy, a rigorous pre-college program for disadvantaged students from East Aurora and West Aurora high schools.

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## CHALLENGE

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Program manager Heather Gates took the stage during the Dunham Fund's presentation to share details on the program's impact. Ninety-five percent of the academy's students last year had

a C average or higher, significantly more than the 71 percent of Waubensee's general student body that can say the same.

"We call it the 'Dunham Difference,'" Gates said.

Maley praised the Early College Academy as an example of the programs that Challenge for Change is hoping to support.

To help local nonprofits craft

winning proposals, the Dunham Fund will hold a two-day grant-writing workshop in November. Applications are due in January, and the Dunham Fund will announce the winners in March.

After the presentation, Tracy Griffin Collander and Suzanne Pinto of the Gateway Foundation, a drug and alcohol rehabilitation group, spoke excitedly about the

contest.

"It really recognizes the hard work it takes to develop a proposal," Collander said.

With state funding for non-profit organizations dwindling, Pinto added, the influx of funding from Dunham is much-needed.

"The timing is great," she said.