



**SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER
ECONOMIC TIMES POSE OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES FOR NON-PROFIT SERF**

by Dawn Solowey (Original Copy Submitted to Town Crier)

The difficult economic times, and the budget cuts they have forced in the Sudbury Public Schools and Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School (LSRHS), pose both an opportunity and a challenge for the Sudbury Education Resource Fund ("SERF").

SERF is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote innovation in Sudbury's K-12 classrooms. SERF raises money from the community, and in turn provides grants to Sudbury teachers and staff to fund leading-edge projects in math and science, languages and the arts, emerging technologies, social development, teacher professional development and more.

In the past three years alone, SERF has awarded nearly \$270,000 in grants to the Sudbury Public Schools and LSRHS. For example, last year, SERF awarded grants to teachers that made substantial changes to the curriculum and to classroom learning. SERF's grants spanned diverse academic needs, including revising the science curriculum to incorporate environmental issues, piloting the use of digital video cameras as a teaching tool, purchasing literacy learning texts for every classroom teacher, and providing a collection of poetry books in each first grade classroom in the district.

This fall, in the face of reduced school budgets, SERF has received a record number of grant applications, seeking a record amount of funding. The grant applications come from teachers and administrators at all of the Sudbury Public Schools and at LSRHS, and seek funding for everything from books to professional development, and from video cameras to musical instruments. More than ever before, many of the grant proposals request innovative means of using technology in the classroom. While cutting-edge technologies are critical for students to succeed in the modern world, they are also expensive, which is why teachers and administrators often look to SERF as a critical source of funding for innovative programs that cannot realistically be paid for within the schools' lean budgets.

While the increased demand provides an opportunity for SERF to make a major contribution to the Sudbury schools and LSRHS, SERF now faces pressure to raise even more funds in a challenging economic climate. In order to raise those funds, SERF has launched its direct appeal, with a letter and e-mail campaign seeking direct donations. Community members and parents who are interested in donating may do so at the SERF website at <http://www.serfsudbury.org>.

SERF is also running its popular ACE Awards program, in which parents and students can recognize deserving teachers and staff with an "ACE" ("Appreciation of Champions in Education") award, by making a contribution to SERF in their name.



Especially at the holidays, many parents choose to recognize a beloved classroom teacher, specialist, school administrator, tutor or coach with an ACE award. In fact, last year, families recognized over 125 teachers with this prestigious award. More information can be found on SERF's website at <http://www.serfsudbury.org>.

This year, SERF will offer its second annual College Fair, scheduled for Saturday, March 27, 2010 at LSRHS. When SERF launched the event last year, more than 95 colleges, universities, and gap-year programs participated, and more than 400 high school students and their families attended from Sudbury and surrounding towns. The College Fair is offered free to students and their families, as a service to the community. SERF is currently seeking corporate sponsors for the College Fair. Businesses interested in becoming corporate sponsors for this event are encouraged to contact SERF for more information via the website at <http://www.serfsudbury.org> or by e-mailing SERF at info@serfsudbury.org.

SERF is turning to its Direct Appeal, ACE Awards program, and College Fair, as its main fundraising events this year. Individuals and families who in past years sponsored the Not Just Desserts fundraiser (which will not be offered this year) are encouraged to transfer their support to either the Direct Appeal or ACE Awards programs, while businesses are urged to consider sponsoring the popular College Fair.

At a time when the schools are forced to cut services, many Sudbury and LSRHS parents, as well as community members, are wondering what they can do to help. Supporting SERF is a meaningful way to contribute directly to the classrooms and to ensure that our schools can continue to provide an outstanding education for all students. SERF needs your help more than ever this year. Please donate at <http://www.serfsudbury.org>.