

Schools look to grant writer for help

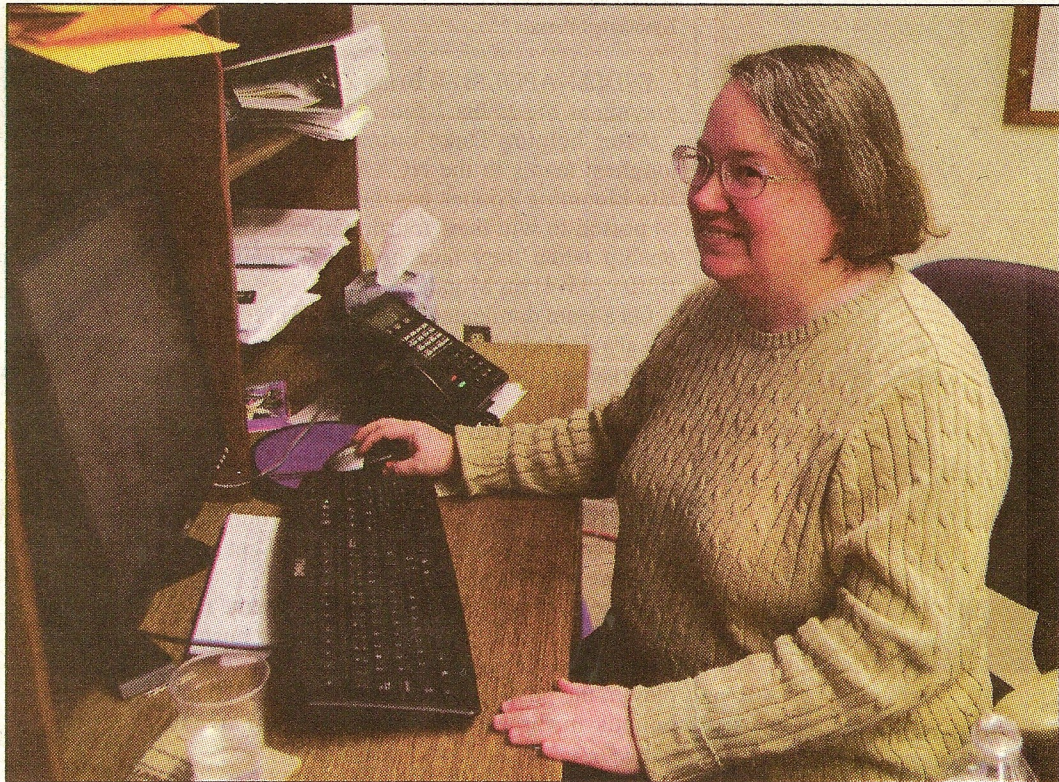
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As Coventry moves towards starting their own education foundation, Sponberg said she has the background knowledge to help them get it off the ground. The Rhode Island Foundation actually gives assistance to communities who raise enough money and at Ponaganset she saw this money translate into the restoration of many small programs in music and the arts.

In Coventry, Sponberg will apply her knowledge to the tracking of grants in the chart of accounts, she said, making sure that they are assigned the right code numbers and watching how they are used. She will also keep her eyes open for grants that can supplement areas that will be cut from the budget or that might be losing their current grant funding.

For example, Coventry won't be getting their Title Four funding for safe and drug-free schools this year, she said, so she will be looking for other grants that could help pay for programs like D.A.R.E.

"I want to find money for things that I know will get cut," she said. "I know there is money out there but as the economy tightens so will that money."



Hannah Piecuch • Daily Times

Darleen Sponberg was hired by the school committee in February to be the district's Associate Director of Grants.

She will also assist teachers and administrators who are applying for grants by making sure that what they submit is complete, she said.

"I will finish the grants," she said, "I get it all together and make sure it meets all the requirements, gets in on time and has the right numbers."

She also keeps things moving, Sponberg added. "If a deadline is a month away, I will give the person who is working on it an e-mail to remind them that it will be due soon."

Although she has not had a chance to sit down with the Alternate Funding Committee to set goals for her work in Coven-

try, Sponberg has been daily compiling lists of new funding sources from which the district can seek grant funding, she said.

"I found a few this morning," she added.

Her goal in her first year is to locate enough new funding to cover her salary and beyond, Sponberg said.

Grant manager hired in Coventry

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COVENTRY — As a school district that receives approximately \$3 million in grants on an annual basis, Coventry needed someone to make sure that the money was used properly.

In addition, they needed to make sure their grants were as competitive as possible, added Superintendent Kenneth DiPietro.

“In these days and times with the economy the way it is schools have to be more aggressive in seeking sources of alternative funding,” he said; the district’s newly hired Associate Director of Grants is part of that process.

With new accounting practices required by the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), keeping track

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of the district's grants is fairly complicated. In looking for a grant manager, DiPietro said he was looking for someone who understood the new Unified Chart of Accounts (UCOA) that has been implemented across the state, who had worked on multiple grants, and who had experience with independent community foundations like the one that Coventry is planning to form to support the school system.

Darleen Sponberg, hired by the school committee in February, meets all these requirements — and she is no stranger to Coventry Public Schools.

With a 28-year career as a finance director in public education, non-profits and the healthcare industry, Sponberg worked as a consultant in Coventry last May as she assisted former Finance Director Anthony Ferrucci to transfer budget data from the old chart of accounts to the new one, she said.

Prior to the consulting work in Coventry, Sponberg was the finance director in the Foster-Gloucester school district, which was slated to pilot the new chart of accounts. She left there to be the acting business manager at the Pawtucket Public Schools. More recently she worked as a consultant for RIDE as they worked to develop the Consolidated Resource Plan for title grants.

Long before she worked in education, Sponberg was the finance director at Cranston Community Action and Self Help Inc. before moving to Massachusetts to work for Blue Cross. Working with the community action groups gave her a lot of grant experience, she says, "since if you're a non-profit you need grants just to operate."

Also, while she worked in Foster-Gloucester the community launched the Ponaganset Education Foundation, a separate community group that raised money to support the local school.