

Hopkins Hill receives \$2k art award

Local car dealer presents check in school ceremony

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COVENTRY — Hopkins Hill Elementary is reaping the benefits of a good guess. During Providence's Festival Fete this fall, Coventry local Michelle McCaughey and her granddaughter Elyssa Pellichione each took a shot at guessing how many balloons Balise Auto could stuff into a Volkswagen Beetle.

McCaughey explained that from the outside of the car, she could see 50 balloons. With a few calculations, she came to a total of 137 balloons. She submitted her guess and went on her way.

McCaughey was later notified that as she off by only one balloon, she was the winner of a \$2,000 check for the art program at the school of her choice.

Since Elyssa currently attends Hopkins Hill Elementary School, the decision was simple, she said.

"At Hopkins Hill, they are so incredible with the kids, teaching them about donating back to the community. It was a pretty easy decision," said McCaughey of her decision to choose Hopkins Hill Elementary.

The check was presented in an assembly last week. Principal Tracey Whitehead explained that theme was "about good things coming back to the Hopkins Hill community."

Over the holidays, the school had collected over 2,000 cans for the Feinste Food Drive, made 10 Thanksgiving baskets for families, and adopted local families at Christmas to help provide presents.

The assembly was "framed as a good thing coming back to benefit our school, but another opportunity for us to give back to the community and those in need," said Whitehead.

This statement rings true as a portion of the funds will be utilized to design and fill bags for children at local family shelters, according to Sarah Hemendinger, one of the art teachers. She explained that \$1,000 of the award will be given to the art department and the other \$1,000 will be given to the music department.

In the art department, the money will be used towards involving every child, from kindergarten through grade 5, with the activity, according to Hemendinger. Each class will decorate a canvas bag and fill it with various art supplies such as sketch books, crayons, markers, pencils and other materials used to create art.

"As we talk about doing good deeds, this money is a wonderful way to give back. It's good for the kids to realize how much they have. A lot of kids are [in shelters] and it's nice to give them something to make their lives a little bit fuller — to draw and express themselves if they are having a tough time," said Hemendinger.

The students participated in a similar activity last year through a Very Special Arts (VSA) grant. They created canvas bags to transport their reading books from classroom to classroom so they "could keep a book handy to read," explained Hemendinger.

However, receiving additional funds such as this

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Award will go to art, music depts.

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is a rare occurrence, she said.

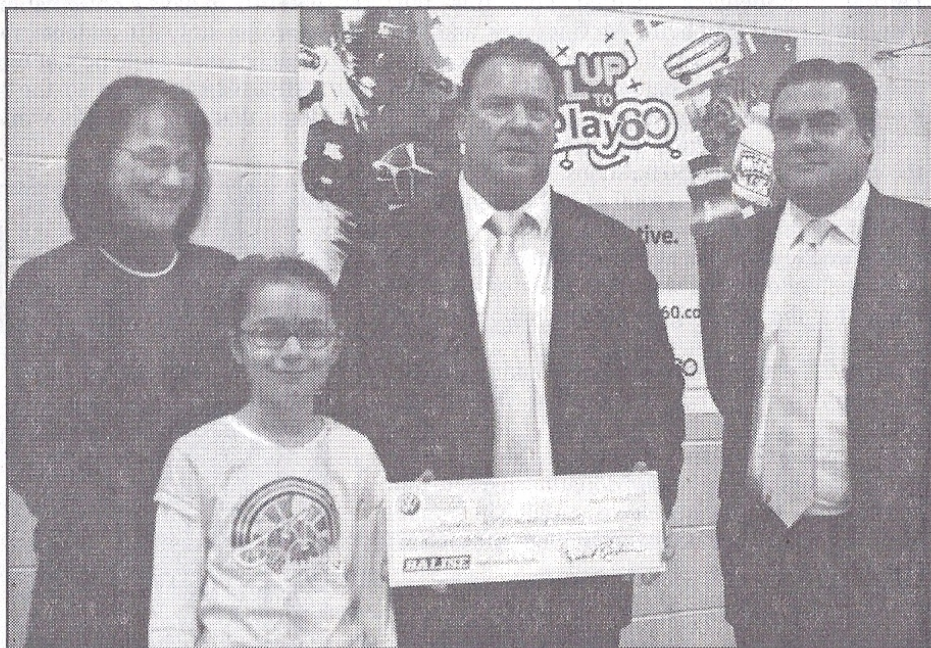
"It's so awesome that Balise sponsored this for the arts," she said. "It's so important. All of the research shows that it helps students to problem solve, to be much more well-rounded and to apply the information they learn in the classroom."

After the school-wide project, Hemendinger plans to use the remainder of the funds towards special supplies in the classroom. Although no decisions have been made, it may include incorporating technology in the art room "which we usually don't have the funds to do."

Nick Zammarelli, one of the music teachers at the school, also has plans for the funds designated to the music department.

The school currently owns the series called Making Music, comprised of music books and CDs. The series offers a teacher's edition and Hopkins Hill was unable to purchase the kindergarten version at the time. However, they now have the funds.

Zammarelli explained that after the kindergarten teacher's edition is purchased, the remainder of the money will be used towards purchasing a new staff board. Since he is visually impaired, he utilizes two boards with felt staffs and



Submitted photo.

(l-r)Michelle McCaughey, Elyssa Pellichone, Michael Balise and the manager of Balise Volkswagen pose with the check Balise Volkswagen presented to Hopkins Hill Elementary for \$2,000.

Velcro music notes as a teaching tool.

One of the boards went missing and Zammarelli plans to replace it.

Balise Auto of Warwick presented the check to Hopkins Hill Elementary on Jan

11. Superintendent Michael Convery, Representative Lisa P. Tomasso (D-Dist. 29, Coventry, West Greenwich) and School Committee Member Judith Liner were also in attendance at the ceremony.