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## **Nonprofit Education Foundation forming to help Washington County Public Schools**

**By ERIN CUNNINGHAM**  
**erinc@herald-mail.com**

WASHINGTON COUNTY — Washington County Public Schools will soon have a new resource for money, volunteers and other assets.

A nonprofit Education Foundation is forming that will tap community resources and advocate for school system funds. The foundation will help manage an existing foundation for Washington County Public Schools with the Community Foundation of Washington County. The balance of that account is about \$39,000, according to Dale Bannon, director of system development for WCPS.

He said the foundation could manage monetary funds and also donated items, like computers or other equipment.

"We'll never have enough government resources to meet all of the needs of public schools," Bannon said.

Officials said the foundation will make it possible for donors to receive tax deductions for their donations. Terri Baker, development coordinator, said the foundation also will allow the school system to apply for additional grant money for which it would otherwise be ineligible.

An Education Foundation first formed in 2001 but became inactive, and the balance of that fund was transferred to the existing Community Foundation fund.

The Washington County Board of Education voted unanimously Tuesday to move forward with a new nonprofit, including filing necessary paperwork for the foundation to be a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Bannon said that process can take up to one year.

Planning for the Education Foundation began in March, and Bannon said that in the next several weeks officials hope to establish a group of business and civic leaders, system staff members and parent representatives that will become the foundation's board of directors. Their first meeting will be Aug. 11.

The board of directors will be responsible for determining where the greatest needs are within the school system and dispensing the money and other resources accordingly. However, Bannon said that donations can be given with the expectation they go to a particular school or project.

"I believe the sky is the limit," Bannon said of what resources the foundation could help secure for the school system. "There is probably a wish list at every school."

Along with its decision Tuesday to move forward with the Education Foundation, the school board voted to reactivate a classroom grant program that will be overseen by the Education Foundation.

The grants will be no more than \$1,000, and no more than \$10,000 in grants will be distributed in one school year, Baker said.

"Sometimes, it just takes a few hundred dollars to enhance educational programs for students," she said.

The first grants will be distributed in October.

The classroom grants will go to classroom projects that could not happen without those additional funds. Until the Education Foundation has formed, these funds will be taken from the existing fund at the Community Foundation.

If you want to volunteer to help the Washington County Public Schools Education Foundation, call Dale Bannon at 301-766-2937 or e-mail him at [bannodal@wcboe.k12.md.us](mailto:bannodal@wcboe.k12.md.us). There are board member positions available, as well as other opportunities.