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Foundation's event to benefit schools

Fundraiser for Ann Arbor Public Schools will focus on innovation

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Leaders of the Ann Arbor Public Schools Educational Foundation hope to turn Saturday's fundraiser at the new Skyline High School into an annual event, spotlighting the district's schools.

"For many people, it's been a while since they were in one of the schools," said Wendy Correll, executive director of the foundation, which is separate from the Ann Arbor school district. "Primarily, we want to celebrate all we do well in Ann Arbor schools."

That's why the foundation is focusing on innovation at Saturday's event, which runs from 7 to 10 p.m. Tickets are \$50 per person in advance or \$60 at the door.

A VIP pre-party before the event bumps the ticket price to \$150. Tickets are available through the foundation's Web site at www.aapsef.org.

The foundation plans to set up several "innovation stations" throughout Skyline, which will highlight various initiatives district teachers have started. Most are supported by the foundation's annual teacher grants program.

There will be presentations on Pioneer's Trailblazers mentoring program, the summer elementary program, a poetry in elementary schools program and a new Spanish-speaking parent support group.

A demonstration will be made of MyAccess, a computer program used to help students improve their literacy.

The foundation donated \$50,000 to the school district earlier this year to train teachers in the program to expand its use in grades 5-9. It was the first gift in a new program from the foundation aimed at funding district-wide initiatives that the district, with its tight budget, can't afford.

Parent Micah Alexander has two daughters in the district who have used MyAccess and said it has helped them.

"I think the foundation is doing what it should and helping out in areas the district can't afford," he said.

At the event, the foundation also will honor former teacher, teachers union president, principal and central administrator Bob Galardi with the first Award for Innovation and Excellence.