



56° F
HI:62 LO:48



Editor [Robin Traum](#): Heard some news you want us to check out? Let me know: Robin.Traum@patch.com

[Home](#)

[News](#)

[Events](#)

[Places](#)

[Marketplace](#)

[Q&A](#)

[Volunteer](#)

Search

[Schools](#)

[Print](#)

[Email](#)

Rockland Community Foundation Awards \$500 to Clarkstown English Teacher for Reading Program

"Reading Rally" designed to encourage students to read more.

By [Robin Traum](#) [Email the author](#) | September 29, 2011

Recommend

Rhea Vogel and 23 others recommend this.

[4 Comments](#)



English Teacher Karen Czajkowski began her "Reading Rally" program in 2010 after witnessing the lack of interest students showed in reading. That effort earned her a 2011 Innovative Teaching Grant from the [Rockland Community Foundation](#) to further expand the program. The \$500 grant will help her further inspire her Clarkstown North High School 10th, 11th and 12th grade students to read more by giving them the opportunity to select books to add to the classroom's library.

"I started a program last year called the reading rally," said Czajkowski, noting it was designed to get students to read more than the required reading assignments.

She set up a classroom library with her books and donations.

"I was so disheartened by the lack of enjoyment I saw with the kids and reading," said Czajkowski. "They just didn't seem to want to read anymore. I really wanted to inspire them to read."

Her application for the foundation's grant described the program and why she started it but she thinks the major component was the section with students' written testimonials about how the program benefitted them. At Tuesday's grant presentation she was joined by two of her 12th grader students, Nicole Cember and Johny Tholany.

Foundation members applauded her efforts and dedication.

"It's really about innovative teaching," said Neil Winter, a member of the foundation's board of directors and public affairs section manager with O&R.

"Anytime you can do that little extra to make the children, men and women, that much happier about reading and just engaging in learning, I think it's great."

"Our mission in life is to improve the lives of all the people in Rockland County by making charitable contributions and coordinating and getting people to help in their community," said Patrick Bryne, president of the foundation.

Czajkowski will take her students to a bookstore will get to select books at an event in October. There will be more to it than a simple purchase. She plans a scavenger hunt based on plot lines and themes of books that students will have to find in the store.

The \$500 grant came from the foundation's education fund and is the second one presented this year. Two science teachers at A. MacArthur Barr Middle School in Nanuet also received a \$500 Foundation grant for their trout-raising and release program this year.

The foundation established six initial funds after its founding in 2005. The foundation states its *goal is to build a permanent endowment by reaching out to nonprofit organizations and individual donors so that they may consider placing their funds under the Rockland Community Foundation*. It is an umbrella organization that allows donors to contribute directly to one of their funds or establish a donor directed fund for support of a specific agency or cause.