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<http://www.laparent.com/school-news/donors-choose-supports-teachers>

Community News: DonorsChoose.org

By Latanya West

Public school teachers got a huge boost this past August when DonorsChoose.org, a national K12 crowd funding website, fully funded all 121 posted donation requests from LA – based classroom teachers. In partnership with Staples, who donated \$1 million dollars to the nonprofit as part of its Staples for Students summer campaign, DonorsChoose.org helped citizen donors enliven learning for more than 15,500 Los Angeles students.

One lucky teacher was Genein Letford, music director at New Academy Elementary School in Canoga Park. Letford received a \$479 flute, six 27-note xylophones, and six colorful ribbon bands. “Getting the email that your proposal’s been funded is just like it’s your birthday!” says Letford, an award winning arts integration specialist. She’s been using the online site to raise funds for her low-income students since 2008.

DonorsChoose.org gives teachers like Letford a ready-made platform to secure online funding for projects in every public school across the U.S. Charles Best, a former history teacher, founded the organization in 2000. Best acted on a hunch that donors would likely fund teacher projects if they knew exactly where and how their donation dollars were spent. Corporate partners include the Melinda and Bill Gates Foundation, Kia, and many others.

The donation process is refreshingly transparent and streamlined. Each teacher proposal page lists materials and shipping costs, the number of students served, the school district and purpose of the project - even taxes get line itemed. Flexible donation options allow you to fund an entire project, or make a partial donation, whatever suits your interest and budget.

Parents and families who want to make an online pledge can simply search by topic, teacher name, school name, address, or zip code to find your child’s classroom. You instantly email, tweet, or post about the teacher project to Facebook or Twitter directly from the DonorsChoose.org website. Posting a project on DonorsChoose.org is free.

The nonprofit has made an impressive impact. According to its website, nearly 2.5 million supporters, many first time donors, have pledged as little as five dollars to over 300,000 teachers, 770,000 classroom projects, and 19 million students to date.

Letford discovered a rich network of like-minded teachers within the DonorsChoose.org universe. As a crowdfunding site dedicated to teachers, Letford says DonorsChoose.org is “a step ahead. They’re not just there to give classroom materials, they’re really there to support us.”

Visit www.DonorsChoose.org and explore how your child’s teacher or school can make amazing things happen in the classroom.

