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# The Almanac

## Pitching in for kids in Menlo Park, East Palo Alto

*Two foundations coexist to fill unmet needs in impoverished schools*

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==I Palo Alto Weekly==

Two foundations have organized to raise support for public school children in east Menlo Park and East Palo Alto.

Both groups draw their funds primarily from outside the community.

The newest entry, the Ravenswood Education Foundation, has raised nearly \$1.3 million since it got started in early 2008, mainly from donors in Menlo Park, Palo Alto, Woodside, Portola Valley and Los Altos.

The 16-year-old East Palo Alto Kids Foundation (EPAK) in recent years has raised about \$225,000 a year to offer grants to public school teachers in the Ravenswood City School District.

The two organizations say they are friendly, cooperative and stay off each other's turf.

"We love EPAK and we support them," Ravenswood Education Foundation director Charley Scandlyn said. "We've purposely stayed away from teacher grants so we wouldn't get in their way. We focus on projects, partners and initiatives."

"We are very cooperative with Ravenswood," Kids Foundation board Vice-President Julie Mahowald said. "They do big projects -- remodeling all the science labs, for example. We do the grants to teachers."

The Kids Foundation for years has enabled teachers to set up programs such as classroom "literacy centers" and purchase book collections, art supplies and math-learning tools known as manipulatives.

In August, the Kids Foundation met with teachers new to the Ravenswood district and offered them each \$200 for classroom supplies, provided they submit receipts.

Kids Foundation volunteers several years ago renovated the library at East Palo Alto's Edison-McNair School, bringing in volunteers to sort through the old books, catalog new books and train librarians and teachers.

"One particular donor was interested and gave a large amount," Ms. Mahowald said. "It's the kind of project a principal doesn't have time for.

"Any bigger project from now on we'll pass along to Ravenswood (Education Foundation)," she said.

The Ravenswood Education Foundation (REF) got its start when private funders sponsored Mr. Scandlyn, formerly a youth minister at Menlo Park Presbyterian Church, to manage the newly formed 501(c)3.

The foundation underwrites extended school days and summer academies at three schools.

Members from the same church provided funds and volunteer power to remodel all of Ravenswood's science labs and have provided continuing support for the district's science teachers, Mr. Scandlyn said.

Some 300 volunteers from an organization called 2nd Mile have done "extreme makeovers" of Ronald McNair and Green Oaks schools, he said.

This fall for the first time, the Ravenswood Education Foundation is reaching out to parents, offering \$1,000 matching grants to any school that can get 100 parents to donate \$10. So far, three schools have met the challenge.

"Our role is really to listen and find out what the needs are," said Mr. Scandlyn, whose office is in district headquarters next to that of Superintendent Maria De La Vega.

"The heroes are those principals and teachers in the district, who are really laboring. They're the experts," he said.

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