



# 2025 IMPACT REPORT

## \$1,492,530

Invested into Programs, Scholarships, and Grants benefiting students

Average of **\$149.51** per GIPS student

# *You are the heart of* **OUR MISSION**

At the GIPS Foundation, we believe that every student's dream deserves a chance to take flight. That belief is made a reality because of you. Think back to the moments that define a student's journey—the relief of a senior receiving their graduation cap when they thought it was out of reach, or the confidence of a young athlete finally stepping onto the court in the right gear. These aren't just small gestures; they are life-changing moments of dignity and hope made possible by your kindness.



Kari Hooker-Leep  
Executive Director  
GIPS Foundation

**Your support does more than just meet immediate needs.** It builds a bridge to the future. Because of you, we've seen incredible milestones this year as our community's record-breaking generosity during the Harvest celebration ensured our programs could reach more students than ever before. We've significantly expanded our Scholarship reach, providing support to graduates as they step into their next chapter, while also launching new Professional Development opportunities that allow our teachers to bring fresh energy and expertise back to their classrooms.

By fueling our Classroom Grants, you've turned standard lessons into extraordinary experiences, sparking a lifelong love of learning and igniting curiosity in every corner of our schools. You'll see the ripples of your impact everywhere, from the compassionate reach of our Legacy Grants to the dedication of our staff with our Teacher of the Year awards to the power of support shown in our Staff Giving Campaign.



Every page represents a life changed and a dream supported. Thank you for standing with the GIPS Foundation. You aren't just a donor.

**You are an essential part of every success story we share.**



## **GIPS Foundation Staff**

Kari Hooker-Leep, Executive Director  
Kari Price, Finance & Operations Coordinator  
Candi Wiemers, Programs & Marketing Coordinator  
Mandy Sullivan, Administration Development Associate  
George Ayoub, Alumni Liaison



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## **Grand Island Public Schools Foundation**

123 S. Webb Rd., Grand Island, NE 68803 • 308-385-5525 • [gipsfoundation.org](http://gipsfoundation.org)

# Foundation Financials

## INVESTING IN IMPACT

### Where Donations Come From

Total Income: \$2,766,055

Staff Campaign \$99,851

Scholarships \$311,709

Restricted \$103,017

Projects & Kindness Funds \$26,953

Investment Income \$1,065,316

Grants, Unrestricted & Memorials \$144,324

GIPSF Programs \$137,676

Community Campaign \$33,554

Booster Clubs \$678,563

Administrative Fees \$165,092

### Where Donations Go

Total Expense: \$2,012,327

\$726,817 Scholarships

\$96,833 Restricted

\$32,260 Projects & Kindness Funds

\$60,551 Grants

\$188,476 GIPSF Programs

\$569,147 Booster Clubs

\$338,243 Administrative Costs

## Fiscal Year 2025

Audited Financials:

September 1, 2024 - August 31, 2025

Charity  
Navigator



FOUR-STAR

## Good at doing good!

We've earned a **FOUR-STAR RATING**  
from Charity Navigator





# *Impacting someone's life is an* **INCREDIBLE FEELING**

## *Scholarships*

### **Supporting students in achieving their dreams and goals**

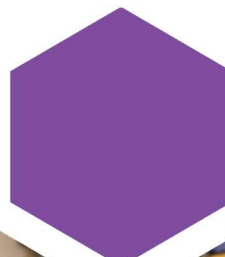
**\$693,823** awarded to **79** Class of 2025 students. Since 2013, **\$212,615** has been granted for dual-credits. Our scholarship receptions provide a meaningful opportunity for students and donors to connect, encourage, and discuss their life ambitions. The impact of these donors is truly transformative.



## *Compassion Grants*

### **Enduring gifts to ensure students have all the resources for success**

**\$161,042** awarded for **86** grants providing warm clothing, mental health counseling, school transportation, participation fees, sports equipment and more. The legacy created by these donors will continue to provide opportunities and compassion for students for years to come.



# Classroom Grants

## Empowering teachers to ignite innovative learning experiences

**\$12,091** awarded benefiting **6,346** students.

### Wild About Monsters

Thanks to a GIPS Foundation Classroom Grant, students at Newell and Lincoln Elementary Schools brought their imaginations to life by creating clay monsters inspired by the book “Where the Wild Things Are.” Over 535 kindergarten through fifth-grade students participated in this hands-on project, led by artist-in-residence Nancy Fairbanks. Fairbanks taught students about clay and guided them through the process of working with it, encouraging creativity and self-expression as they crafted their own unique monsters.

This project “supports our Positive Supports goal, offering a meaningful outlet for creativity in the classroom,” said Principal Nate Balcom. By connecting literature with art, the activity not only enriched students’ learning but also provided a fun and engaging way to foster self-confidence and collaboration in a supportive environment.



# Teacher of the Year

## Celebrating the dedicated champions that guide, motivate and inspire

**487** teachers, staff and administrators were nominated. **2,025+** submissions were received. **6** awards were given. Every nomination received from parents, students, or colleagues was shared with the nominated staff member.





# *Investing in their* **INNOVATIONS**

## **GISH School Store Gets Creative with New DTF Printer**

Thanks to a GIPS Foundation Classroom Grant, students at Grand Island Senior High are transforming from consumers to creators. The grant funded a Direct-to-Film (DTF) printer, allowing the Academy of Business and Communications and the student-run School Store to produce custom apparel and gear on demand.

Previously, the store relied on external vendors, resulting in high costs and long wait times. Now, students can print designs for less than 20 cents each, enabling them to sell T-shirts for as low as \$10. This hands-on experience teaches students to manage the entire business cycle—from consulting with customers like Islander Robotics to launching their own small businesses.

Most importantly, every sale is an investment. All proceeds are funneled back into student projects within the Academy, ensuring a sustainable cycle of learning. By bridging the gap between classroom theory and retail reality, the GIPS Foundation is helping students create, sell, and succeed—one design at a time.

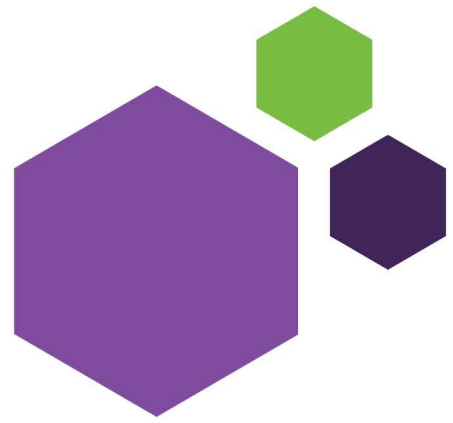


## *Harvest* **Evening of joy, gratitude, celebrating success and raising funds**

Our 4th annual Harvest event was a resounding success, bringing together our community to raise vital funds for our schools. The evening was full of emotions ranging from the thrill of an exciting auction, the uplifting presentation of the Heart of the Foundation Award, to the elation of choosing a delectable dessert.



# Be a part of our **COMPASSION**



## **Giving Every Student a Voice**

At Starr Elementary, second-grader Alex is a vibrant student with a diagnosis of Autism. Like many students, Alex's journey included the challenge of limited verbal communication, a barrier that made it difficult for him to fully participate and express his bright personality. Before receiving his grant-funded communication device, his verbal output was limited, often resulting in short phrases like, "yes, blue." When frustration mounted, his inability to communicate led to challenging behaviors.

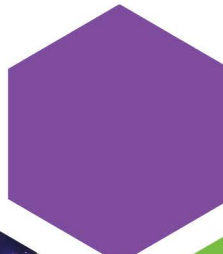
Thanks to a Compassion Grant from the Embree "Em" Learned Memorial Fund, Alex received a device that is nothing short of transformative. This technology is his pathway to independence and social connection, empowering him to spontaneously share his thoughts and needs. The change has been profound.

This device isn't just equipment; it's a voice. It has allowed Alex to integrate fully into his classroom environment and continue on a positive trajectory of growth and development.



## *Staff Campaign* **Generosity of our staff is inspiring, unwavering, and extraordinary**

Our Staff Giving Campaign raised over **\$101,074**, demonstrating the dedication and commitment of our staff to our students' success. A significant highlight of the 2025 campaign was the heartfelt gesture from Joel and Terry Wiegand, who provided a **\$5,000** challenge gift.





# *You are a part of their* **EMPOWERMENT**

## **Professional Growth through Grants**

At the Grand Island Public Schools Foundation, our mission extends beyond supporting students—we are also deeply committed to empowering the educators and staff who shape their success. Through the Dr. Eugene Miller Professional Development Grant and the newly established GIPS Foundation Professional Development Grants, we are proud to invest in the continued growth and excellence of our district's professionals.

"The Grand Island Public Schools Foundation was excited to support our educators, staff, and administration through the Dr. Eugene Miller Professional Development Grant and the two new GIPSF Professional Development Grants," said Kari Hooker-Leep, Executive Director of the GIPS Foundation. "These grants represent our commitment to providing them with resources to empower and excel in their roles in shaping the success of our students."

Each grant awards \$1,000 toward further education or training that supports the applicant's current role and future goals within Grand Island Public Schools. The two new GIPSF Professional Development Grants were made possible thanks to the generosity of our community during the 2024 Harvest event. This annual grant fund will empower our staff for years to come.



# *Thank you for empowering* **OUR STUDENTS**

## **Grand Island Public Schools Foundation**

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