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**THINGS
YOU
SHOULD
KNOW
ABOUT**

W.E.E. Learning Bus

By next fall, there will be a computer lab on wheels rolling through the streets of Blue Springs, making stops at area schools and in neighborhoods.

The Women Endowing Education Group provided the Blue Springs School District with a grant to create the W.E.E. Learning Bus, the first of its kind of Missouri, said Katherine Barton, executive director of the Blue Springs Education Foundation. She said the idea came from an administrator who heard about a similar mobile technology lab in Brownsville, Texas.

"The members of W.E.E. hope that their investment in the Blue Springs School District will assist in accomplishing the mission of the foundation by raising student achievement and increasing awareness of the foundation in the community," Barton said. "They also want to provide services and build even stronger relationships with the patrons of the community."

Here are five things to know about the W.E.E. Learning Bus:

1

Mobility. The learning bus is a 76-passenger school bus being transformed into a mobile computer lab. Barton said it will roll into the neighborhoods of the Blue Springs School District four nights each week beginning in August. Hollis-Miller Architects, as well as the Blue Springs School District's Transportation Department, are working to transform the bus.

2

Computer learning. There will be 20 computer stations within the learning bus. During the day, the bus can be used by one of the district's schools as an additional technology center or help adults access GED classes or assistance with job applications. Barton said it can even be parked at a senior center, where older adults can brush up on their computer skills.

"Students will be able to board the bus in the evenings in their own neighborhood and use the 20 computers to do homework, research skills, ACT preparation and much more," Barton said. "It will provide interest-based educational programming in areas of the Blue Springs community that have limited access to those programs currently. The bus will act as a 'hot spot' and allow Internet access to the area in which it is parked."

3

Collaboration. The learning bus is a collaborative project by the Education Foundation, the district and area businesses and organizations. W.E.E. held a competitive grant program last year and awarded the Blue Springs district a multi-year, \$25,000 grant to be used as seed money for the project, which will ultimately cost about \$250,000.

4

Volunteers. The bus will be staffed with volunteers from W.E.E., the Mid-Continent Public Library, the HOME Team and others while the bus is mobile during the evenings. Barton said while students are working with a certified teacher aboard the bus, volunteers will be meeting with the families outside the bus to make stronger connections with them and help to provide services for their children.

5

Sponsors. Barton said the foundation is looking for businesses to provide sponsorships as a funding mechanism for the bus. Those who are interested should contact Barton at 816-224-1300 or by email at kbarton@bssd.net.

— Kelly Evenson