

# Dart Foundation Grants Benefit Local Children

A local nonprofit organization and an area school were the recent recipients of \$8,360 in grants from the Dart Foundation. Upson County Food for Thought received \$3,360 to purchase weekend food packages for needy children pre-K through middle school, and Upson-Lee North Elementary was awarded \$5,000 to be used towards constructing an outdoor classroom to serve as a STEM learning environment. Representatives from both were on hand for official check presentations from Dart Foundation giving committee members.



**Pictured above and below: Dart Foundation representatives Latonya Walton, Lekchisa Pennyman, LaRae McGouirk, Robin Gerke, Marlitta Kendrick, Wendy Fordham, and Dennis Strom, presenting their checks.**

Upson County Food for Thought has been operating its weekend food program since 2012. Approximately 200 children per week from struggling families are assisted during the school year, with volunteers from the Rotary Club and Kiwanis Club helping to pack the bags. Upson-Lee North Elementary plans to implement its project beginning in late summer/early fall. The outdoor space will have various features such as an Earth and Space Lab, a Physical Science Lab, and a Life Science Lab. Students will collect soil and water samples, collect data from outdoor thermometers, observe the surroundings with binoculars and drone cameras, and design robots to navigate and explore spaces that are impassable.



“Both of these grants are very meaningful to us,” said LaRae McGouirk, local Dart Foundation representative. “Teachers, counselors, families and neighbors all attest to the need and the great benefit of the food program. This helps take the pressure off al-

ready-struggling families on weekends. And the outdoor classroom project at Upson-Lee North Elementary is a very creative and unique way to incorporate STEM learning outside. Having a miniecosystem to explore and

investigate will be exciting for the students.”  
The Dart Foundation is a private family foundation established by Dart Container Corporation founder William A. Dart and his wife Claire T. Dart. The Foundation sup-

ports projects that enhance education, especially in the areas of science, technology, engineering and math, and those that improve the quality of life in specific communities, including Thomaston and the surrounding area.