

Light The Way Gala Event Tops \$16,000

By Dave Bell

The third annual "Light The Way Gala" raised more than \$16,000 to enhance educational programs in the Bond County Community Unit No. 2 School District.

The gala, held on Saturday night at Copper Dock Banquet Center, attracted a crowd of about 240 people and included both silent and live auctions to sell items donated to benefit the district's foundation.

"This is an event that does great things for our schools," said Don Dillon, president of the district's academic foundation, the sponsor of the event. "It has really turned into a community-wide effort."

Other officers of the foundation board include: William Beckert, vice president; Amanda Dussold, treasurer; and Valerie Klenke, secretary.

Dozens of items for the silent auction were arranged on a pair of long tables in the banquet room. Participants wrote their bids for those items on a form, with the highest bid at a designated closing time winning the bidding.

The live auction, conducted by Langham Auctioneers, featured more than 60 items. Though all the numbers weren't finalized on Saturday night, Dillon estimated that the auctions raised more than \$16,000. Ticket sales, foundation memberships and other revenue sources were still being tabulated.

BCCU #2 Superintendent Wes Olson expressed his appreciation to gala participants and the foundation. He announced that the foundation has committed \$10,000 to a science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) lab for the district.

He also pointed out a 3-D printer, located in the back of the room. Because of the foundation's support, he said, the district now has equipment such as that available for students to use. An owl figurine made by the printer was auctioned off Saturday night.

After the auction, Olson told The Advocate: "This event will help us with the STEM initiative at the high school.

"It also will allow us to award teacher grants to provide supplemental materials that aren't available within the usual school budget. Without the help of the foundation, we wouldn't be able to get those things into the hands of the teachers and students.

"This event also is a great opportunity for us to share with the community some of the things we're doing in our district.

"Not every district has an event like this, and it is only possible because of the great support our communities provide for our schools."

Following the auction, the winner of a 50-50 raffle was announced, and music was provided by The Chapman Brothers.



BIDDING AT THE GALA: Several participants in Saturday's 'Light The Way Gala' are shown sizing up items on the silent auction table. The annual fundraising event for the Bond County Community Unit #2 School District Academic Foundation raised more than \$16,000.

Photo by Dave Bell