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Poshard Foundation gives \$50,000 to Resilient Illinois to aid students with trauma

Marilyn Halstead

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Jo Poshard talks to Mary Mary Beth Goff of Unity Point School during a press conference Wednesday in Carterville to announce the Poshard Foundation's grant to Resilient Southern Illinois.

Marilyn Halstead

CARTERVILLE — Resilient Southern Illinois will continue to help school children learn to deal with adverse events, thanks in part to a grant from the Poshard Foundation.



Jo and Glenn Poshard speak during a press conference Wednesday in Carterville after donating \$50,000 to Resilient Southern Illinois.

Wednesday afternoon Jo and Glenn Poshard, founders of the Poshard Foundation for Abused Children, gave Resilient Southern Illinois \$50,000.

Mary Jane Morris, Illinois Education Association teaching and learning director and RSI coordinator, served as master of ceremonies during the press release for the donation.

Morris said Resilient Southern Illinois is an organization that started in 2018 and partners with 15 school districts in Southern Illinois to put into place support for students dealing with trauma. They offer resources for school staff and help schools create safe spaces for children.

Paul Reville of the Harvard Education Redesign Lab and Harvard Graduate School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, talked about their partnership with Resilient Southern Illinois and the important work the organization does and thanked the Poshards for supporting them.

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“What you are doing to focus in this work really sums up what we believe in — the design lab will be necessary in the future,” Reville said.

He also said issues of student mental health are very important because children need to be able to focus on their work at school. Problems have existed for some time, but COVID-19 has simply exasperated the issues of mental health for children.

He also talked about the importance of partnering with the community to help schools teach resiliency and form relationships with children.

“We need the communities to come together and make this effort successful,” Reville said.

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Representatives of two schools spoke about Resilient Southern Illinois and the work being done in their schools.

Mary Beth Goff, dean of students and Resilient Southern Illinois liaison for Unity Point School, said trauma-informed schools promote learning about and understanding the whole student which can increase positive academic outcomes.

She added that it provides a positive learning environment where students can engage and educators can provide support for students’ personal experiences.

Goff also said we need to change how we view schools as just learning institutions.

“For a lot of students, school is a safe place where stability exists and they are served at least two meals each day. Because of this, school has a moral obligation to implement trauma-informed care for students and educators,” Goff said. “Students have no control over where

they live or the circumstances they were born into, but we as adults have control over how we respond to their needs.”

Joshua Stafford, superintendent of Vienna High School District 133, is developing a county-wide student cabinet.

“One of the most important things we do in the community and world is to care for young people,” Stafford said.

He also thanked Glenn and Jo Poshard for caring for children and for being a beacon for our communities, adding that Resilient Southern Illinois is also a beacon of hope for children in K-12 and their schools.

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Glenn Poshard said they are grateful to partner with Resilient Southern Illinois and the Harvard Design Lab.

“Many children will develop resiliency they need,” Glenn Poshard said.

Jo Poshard, a retired elementary educator, said she wishes she had known more about adverse childhood experiences as an educator.

Morris thanked the Poshards and said the money will go toward training and resources for Southern Illinois Schools.

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