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National Science Foundation awards grant to Buffalo nonprofit First Hand Learning, Inc to supplement \$1.6 Million Science Firsthand after-school project.

The National Science Foundation has approved a \$70,000 supplemental award to Buffalo-based First Hand Learning, Inc. to increase support for the \$1.6M, five-year after-school Science Firsthand program in Buffalo, St. Louis, Albuquerque, and New York City. The program began locally in 2005.

Peter B. Dow, chairman of First Hand Learning (FHL) and Principal Investigator for the project, announced the new award last week to the organization's board of directors. "This new grant will enable us to build a collaboration with Canisius College and Buffalo State College to engage college students as science mentors to urban children."

The supplemental funds provided by the NSF will be used in part to support external evaluation of a pilot service-learning partnership with Canisius College biology professor Ann Wright, and Buffalo State professor Catherine Lange, who have each developed college courses that include a component that requires students to serve the community. According to Wright; "This aspect of the course adds a dimension to student learning that is effective and memorable. It offers great benefits to both the college students and the children they mentor." The model for the pilot is based on a successful program involving the University of Wisconsin and after-school science in Madison, WI.



Science Firsthand (SF) offers middle-school students the chance to pursue science investigations of their own choosing during after-school hours. The program provides crucial support for these explorations: adult mentors, materials, and staff training. Project Director William Rogers said that the Science Firsthand volunteers and staff members have designed a program to meet the need for students' afterschool science investigations at twelve community based organizations. Central to the success of this program have been the adult volunteers who mentor the students. The collaboration with Canisius College and Buffalo State faculty members represents an advance in mentor preparation as well as a long-term source of volunteers for the Science Firsthand Collaborative of Buffalo.

Science Firsthand is the latest in a series of successful education projects orchestrated by Dow. Since 1990, he has brought over \$10 million in public and private grant funds to Buffalo through partnerships with the Buffalo Public Schools, the Boys & Girls Clubs of Buffalo, the Buffalo Zoo, and the Buffalo Museum of Science. FHL's president and co-founder, David Hartney, commented on Dow's phenomenal contributions. "Peter's work is very highly regarded and recognized at the national level, but he is relatively unsung here in Buffalo, where he volunteers his time extensively. For example, he chaired the committee that wrote an addendum to the National Science Education Standards for the National Academies of Science. Peter has an amazing ability to generate, and develop support for, good ideas, so that they get implemented." In addition to chairing First Hand Learning's board, Dow currently serves on the boards of the Buffalo Zoo, and the Park School of Buffalo.

First Hand Learning, Inc. is a Buffalo-based nonprofit corporation founded in 1998 to promote learning from direct experience, inquiry-based teaching, and collaboration between formal and informal educational organizations. Additional information about the organization can be found at www.firsthandlearning.org.

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