

DASEF receives \$50K for education center at Big Oak Park

SMYRNA, Del. — **WE'VE REPORTED** The Delaware AeroSpace Education Foundation has been working for a few years now to build an Innovation Technology Exploration Center at Big Oak Park south of Smyrna.

DASEF already has an environmental facility at the park used for school field trips and events. However, they are still working on the 40,000-square-foot ITEC building. The facility, once complete, will have 14 classrooms, a resource center for teachers and exhibits about alternative energy.

Early last year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development provided DASEF with a \$50,000 grant to go towards a solar roof at the Learning Center. It is through such donations that DASEF is able to make progress on construction. The USDA presented DASEF on Monday with another \$50,000 grant for the purchase and installation of a geothermal system. Several federal, state and local officials were in attendance to present a check to DASEF to go towards the \$515,000 geothermal system project. The project consists of eighty 400-foot deep wells that will provide heating and cooling to the ITEC building. One key point several officials made was the significance of educating young children on the importance of science.

U.S. Senator Chris Coons quoted poet William Yeats. "It was Yeats who once said that education is not filling a bucket, but lighting a fire. One of the things that space exploration has done now for two generations of Americans is to light a fire of optimism, of confidence, or vision."

Coons congratulated the USDA and DASEF for continuing to educate young Delawareans. "It is only with that sort of energy that we will continue to be successful in graduating the future leaders in engineering, technology, science, math and reading."

WHAT'S NEXT DASEF is still in the process of applying for other grants to go towards the geothermal project. At this point, they are waiting to hear back from some of the grants they have applied for, according to DASEF President Dr. Stephanie Wright. They'll eventually receive \$30,000 from DNREC's Delaware Alternative Energy Rebate Program.

Wright said it is unknown when the geothermal system project and ITEC building will be completed because they do construction as they receive funds. "I've always said if we were to get the \$7.2 million needed for the project, we could finish it in 18 months," Wright said.



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JENNIFER DAILEY PHOTOS By Jennifer Dailey, reporter [Smyrna/Clayton Sun-Times](#)

USDA Rural Development presented the Delaware AeroSpace Education Foundation Monday morning with a \$50,000 grant for a geothermal system project. Pictured (from left) are U.S. Rep. John Carney, Sen. Bruce Ennis, U.S. Senator Chris Coons, DASEF President Dr. Stephanie Wright, USDA Rural Development State Director Jack Tarburton, U.S. Sen. Thomas Carper, and DNREC Secretary Collin O'Mara.