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## Caesars distributes grant awards

\$300,000 will fund full-day kindergarten

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About 850 New Albany-Floyd County students will be able to attend kindergarten classes free during the next school year thanks to a \$300,000 grant from the Caesars Foundation of Floyd County.

The award was one of seven totaling \$1.6 million announced yesterday during a ceremony in the Bacchus Conference Room of the Caesars Indiana casino in Harrison County.

"Thank you so much for this. Children will benefit so much," Superintendent Dennis Brooks said after the award was announced.

The money will support an effort that began before the start of classes in August when Brooks and other school officials announced the New Albany Floyd County Education Foundation had raised enough to pay for free kindergarten in 2007-08 and would continue a drive to do so during the next school year.

This year's program is being financed with about \$400,000 in pledges and contributions to the education foundation, and next year's cost will be the same. With the grant from the Caesars foundation, Brooks said, about \$100,000 still must be raised, but there's plenty of time to do so.

State funding of full-day kindergarten for all Indiana students is expected to start in the fall of 2009, so foundation funding won't be needed from that point on.

Tom Lumley, president of the education foundation board, told the board of the Caesars foundation that daylong classes give young children a solid base for their years in school. Without the classes, he said, many students would lag.

After all seven grants had been announced, Mark Seabrook, president of the Caesars Foundation of Floyd County, told the crowd of about 40 people at the luncheon ceremony that the board struggled with how best to use the money.

"These aren't easy decisions," Seabrook said, adding that the board this year selected several organizations for substantial awards instead of picking just one as it has in the past.

"We hope everybody's pleased," he said.

The Caesars Foundation of Floyd County has presented a total of \$12.75 million in grants, including \$370,000 in awards of up to \$25,000 announced earlier this month, to local nonprofit organizations in the county in the past seven years.

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