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ELF grant funds new engineering lab at Helen Keller Middle School

Written by Julie Weisberg

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The new Engineering and Innovation Lab at Helen Keller Middle School will be the home for the school's new pre-engineering program. The lab was created through a grant from the Easton Learning Foundation.

When Helen Keller Middle School students walked through the halls during their first day of school yesterday, it is more than likely quite a few noticed something exciting and new about Room 105.

During the summer, the classroom was transformed into a state-of-the-art laboratory to allow the school to implement a new pre-engineering program, "Gateway to Technology," for Easton sixth- to eighth-grade students for the 2010-11 school year.

The new Engineering and Innovation Lab — as the renovated and revamped classroom is formally known — will be the home for the program, created by Project Lead the Way.

The educational organization partners with middle and high schools across the nation to create curriculum that focuses on enhancing and advancing students' science, technology, engineering and mathematical (STEM) foundations and skills.

The lab is the latest project to be fully-funded through a sizable grant from the Easton Learning Foundation (ELF).

Since its formation six years ago, the nonprofit ELF has awarded a total of some \$200,000 in grants to fund education-related projects and programs in all three Easton schools, as well as local community organizations.

But the new lab at Helen Keller is by far the foundation's largest project to date, with an initial grant of \$115,000 that allowed the school to purchase new computers, modules, building materials and furniture; and to renovate the room.

"There's a lot of pride that this program got implemented, and that it was a local effort," said Bernadette Waterman, ELF board president and one of the organization's co-founders.

"There's not many organizations you can give to and see that kind of impact right away and in your own community," Waterman said.

Joan C. Parker, Keller principal, was grateful for ELF's assistance, praising Waterman and the entire ELF board.

"I have such respect for their skills, knowledge and commitment to offering programs for Easton's children, who will live in a time that is different from



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