

Aid drive for city schools takes off

BY TOM TROY
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Another local fund-raising campaign is under way — this one to benefit the Toledo Public Schools.

Superintendent Merrill Grant wants to revive the district's dormant foundation with a professional fund-raising campaign. His goal: \$1 million.

Dr. Grant said he has hired Susan Zurawski, a Toledo marketing and development consultant, to try to meet the goal by July 1, 2001.

"We're setting up a fund that is apart from the operational budget. It's an opportunity to develop projects for student achievement that you've always dreamed of but have not been able to do for budgetary reasons," he said.

Ms. Zurawski, 44, who started March 1, is paid \$3,250 a month by the Toledo Public Schools Foundation. She and the superintendent have



Zurawski plans aggressive try. begun visiting corporate leaders to generate leadership gifts — contributions of \$50,000 to \$100,000.

"We're looking for \$1 on up. We're grateful for any support," said Ms. Zurawski. A graduate of Gesu Elementary School and St. Ursula Academy, Ms. Zurawski said the campaign will appeal to Toledo residents' pride in their city and their public school system.

"This is a very aggressive undertaking," she said.

The foundation was established in 1988 but never has been very active, Dr. Grant said.

Dr. Grant is assembling 15 to 20 people to be on the foundation board. Proceeds from the endowment will go for a variety of uses, including financial incentives and scholarships to outstanding teachers and students, technology, and classroom improvements, he said.

Schools

Continued from Page 9

Ms. Zurawski was a marketing and development director for Citi-Fest, Inc., for five years in the 1980s, she said. Since becoming a consultant in 1991, she has directed a number of fund-raisers, including drives to benefit the New Connecting Point mental health agency and Toledo Rowing Club. She also works for the Toledo Sports Arena soliciting sponsorships for the annual Old Newsboys Goodfellow Association circus.

She has a master's degree in business administration from the University of Toledo.

Steven Monro, president of the Toledo Rowing Foundation, said Ms. Zurawski is raising money for the club's new boathouse. "She does not take no for an answer. I think with all the trials and tribulations of the school district, people will support it. I think people realize the importance of our kids."

The fund drive is being tied to

the school district's 150th anniversary, being celebrated this year.

Ms. Zurawski's plan is to hold two to three meetings a week with potential major donors. She hopes to raise \$125,000 by Aug. 31 and another \$125,000 by Dec. 31.

Dr. Grant said the meetings so far have been productive.

"It's pretty exciting for us," he said. "People in the corporate community really recognize the needs. They're all willing to help us."

Though the district gets more than \$200 million a year in state, federal, and local tax support, a foundation will allow for some projects that can't be funded through the regular budget, Dr. Grant said.

He said he is using a San Francisco program as his model. The Every Child Can Learn Foundation was created in 1995 and collected \$996,000 in contributions during the 1997-98 academic year, a spokesman for the San Francisco Unified School District said.

"There aren't many urban districts that have a workable foundation," Dr. Grant said. "We're going to be one of the few."

See SCHOOLS, Page 10