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Saranac Promise wins big**By Darcy Meade — darcy.meade@sarac-standard.com**

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SARANAC — There were several big winners during the first Saranac Promise Reverse Raffle, including the scholarship foundation.

The Saranac Promise is an endowment that provides financial assistant to Saranac graduates for college or vocational education and was started in 2013. The class of 2016 were the first recipients of the scholarships. Sixty-eight students were given scholarships totaling \$45,000 at the end of the last school year.

The reverse raffle, which was held in September, grossed \$18,800. That money will go directly into the promise. The raffle worked in reverse, meaning those whose tickets were drawn were out of the running for the prize money. It came down to the final five.

"In the reverse raffle when you get to the last five, they can either decide to split it five ways, which would be \$500 a piece or elect to keep going and one of them gets drawn and then they can split it four ways or keep going," Saranac Superintendent Jason Smith said. "They got to the five and decided they would all take the \$500, all donated \$100 back and kept the \$400."

Smith said the event went really well and they already have the date set for next year, Sept. 22, 2018. Many of those who attended gave great feedback, according to Smith.

"What was really nice is we had recent student graduates, a couple of tables of current staff, a couple tables of retired staff, so you got to visit with teachers who you haven't seen in a long, long time and then we had a table of the 80 and older," Smith said. "Ninety-two was the highest we went age wise. It was just a nice variety and group of people and it was nice for the retired teachers to talk to current teachers and vice versa. It almost felt a little bit like an alumni event."

Smith graduated in 1994 and said he was able to catch up with some of the teachers he hasn't seen in a while.

Not only were funds donated from the winners of the raffle, but some items were auctioned off that were donated from community members. One donated a time share for a week anywhere in the world, loads of gravel and a cow that was butchered and processed, among others.

"We had donations from the Red Wings and Tigers and some of the Detroit entities and it worked really, really well," Smith said. "Kudos to Barb Sparks and Gloria Hubbard, both retired teachers. They did the bulk of the work of soliciting donations and ads for our program."

Nearly \$2,500 came from ad sales and \$11,000 came from silent auction items.

For more information on the Promise, or to donate, call 616-642-1400.

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