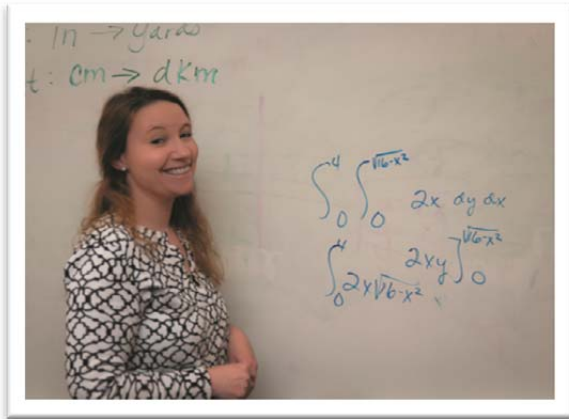


## Straits Area Students Experience the Power of Giving Back

Just about the only way you will get time and a photo of Math teacher Jennifer Lee, is if you focus on her students. This savvy, determined teacher and mentor wants nothing more than for her students to learn, succeed and make a difference in their community and the world. That's



exactly why she is an excellent teacher for Mackinaw City High School and advisor for the Straits Area Community Foundation's (SACF) Youth Advisory Council (YAC).

She was asked to serve as the YAC advisor the first year she started teaching, now 16 years ago. She joined the board for the Straits Area Community Foundation shortly after and also has served for nine years on the board for the SACF administration arm, the Community Foundation for Northeast Michigan. She says she "really

enjoys how the Youth Advisory Council has grown and the way the students take their responsibilities so seriously." That was very evident on a recent trip to Mackinaw City High School, one of four high schools that participate in the Straits Area YAC.

The students were quick to share how much it means to them to make decisions on grants that can help their community and their school. They pointed out a recent grant that enabled the students to purchase a popcorn machine for the school that was then used to raise funds for a class trip to Washington, D.C. YAC members explained how that grant was "an example of how a small amount of money can be leveraged to do big things, and will continue to help future students for years to come."

Approximately 10 percent of the students participate in YAC. They credit their participation for "helping them to be more responsible with money" and appreciating how "philanthropy is much more than just making a donation." They strive to be good stewards of every dollar they award in grants. Oftentimes, that means making some tough decisions when they have more requests than available grant dollars.



In order to have a better understanding of local needs and priorities, YAC students get out and

volunteer in their communities. They specifically mentioned how much they enjoy volunteering at the Wawatam Area Senior Citizens Center in Mackinaw City around the holidays and at the Northern Michigan Home Show in Cheboygan. They also said these opportunities give them a chance to make more people aware of the Straits Area Community Foundation and the importance of giving back.



To learn more about the Straits Area Youth Advisory Council, visit “Youth Advisory Councils” at [www.sacf.net](http://www.sacf.net) or call toll-free: (877) 354-6881.