

County's students benefit from teachers' grants

By CASEY S. ELLIOTT
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A set of mini-grants through a local foundation are allowing Athens County students opportunities to visit The Wilds, conduct virtual field trips and utilize cooking to learn math, science, nutrition and reading skills.

Several Nelsonville-York Elementary teachers, an Alexander High School teacher and two Athens City Schools teachers received grants as a result of a partnership between the Foundation for Appalachian Ohio and either Diagnostic Hybrids, Inc. or Walmart.

The foundation's "Strive for Excellence" mini-grants program involves partnering with DHI and Walmart to provide classroom instruction supporting science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine. DHI's mini-grant of \$1,900 went to Nelsonville-York fifth-grade science teacher Amanda Dalton, who will use the grant to take approximately 100 students to The Wilds in Cumberland and teach them about conservation.

"I've been wanting to do this for years," she said, adding the grant will cover the full cost of the trip and of lunches for students and staff attending. "We're just extremely grateful. I think these kids will be getting a lesson in life they will never be able to get anywhere else."

The Walmart partnership grants have been given to Nelsonville-York second-grade teacher Joni Carpinelli, kindergarten teacher Josie Stricklin, sixth-grade science teacher Tess Addis and sixth-grade social studies teacher Tina McWilliams. Carpinelli will use her \$1,914 grant to purchase the GeoSafari Quiz Bowl program; Stricklin will use the \$2,500 grant to develop a cooking class for students, teaching mathematics, science, life, nutrition and reading skills; Addis is using her \$1,125 grant to incorporate iPod Touch technology to investigate, explore, research and read about science topics; and McWilliams is using her \$1,199 grant to implement interactive learning with the Classroom Jeopardy! program.

Teresa Dearth, principal at Nelsonville-York Elementary, was pleased to hear that so

many of her teachers received funding this year for classroom activities.

"(The grants) open up opportunities for our students, and gives us materials to provide a good variety of learning experiences to meet the needs of different kinds of learners," she said, adding that several of the grants will help pay for programming to integrate into new smartboards the elementary classrooms recently had installed.

The Walmart mini-grant also provides \$2,500 to Alexander High School teacher Kevin Dael for continuing and expanding the Lego robotics program and \$2,500 to first-grade teacher Elizabeth Swatzel of Morrison-Gordon Elementary for video conferencing.

Swatzel said her grant will be used to provide video conferencing with organizations such as the Columbus Zoo and NASA. The funds will pay for equipment such as a projector and screen, a new computer and camera to hold the conferencing. She added she hopes to expand that to other cultures across the country, allowing students to get a different perspective on day-to-day living.

"We hope to tap into conferences with past student to do some different cultural activities, and maybe even current students that have family in other countries or other places in the United States," she said. "We hope to be able to see what life is like in other places and bring to life these different places and different cultures."

Morrison-Gordon Elementary Principal Penny McDowell said she was thrilled to see one of her teachers receive a grant for instruction.

"This is terrific," she said. "This is a large grant, and I'm sure she will put it to good use. We were surprised and excited to hear of it."

Sixth-grade teacher Miranda Hodgson of The Plains Elementary was granted \$900 through FAO and Walmart to provide an on-site field trip from All About Learning, a program focused on engineering through a hands-on enrichment program.

For more information, visit www.appalachianohio.org.

Recipients of mini-grants

■ **Nelsonville-York Elementary** fifth-grade science teacher Amanda Dalton, second-grade teacher Joni Carpinelli, kindergarten teacher Josie Stricklin, sixth-grade science teacher Tess Addis and sixth-grade social studies teacher Tina McWilliams

■ **Alexander High School** teacher Kevin Dael

■ **Morrison-Gordon Elementary** Morrison-Gordon Elementary first-grade teacher Elizabeth Swatzel

■ **The Plains Elementary** sixth-grade teacher Miranda Hodgson