

High school recipient of local grants

Two high school teachers implement real-world practices into the classroom

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Grants from the Mason Schools Foundation, distributed on August 19 are being put to use for this 2011-2012 school year, according to the Mason City Schools district website.

Environmental Science students third trimester will have the opportunity to participate in a brand new project with the money awarded, according to Mason High School Science teacher Charity Distel.

Distel received the money from the Mason Schools Foundation grant in August for \$5,718, which, according to Distel, she will use to incorporate a new project in the Environmental Science curriculum: designing and constructing a rain garden.

“[Students] will analyze the school campus, determine where rainwater runs off [of the building] and use a landscaping software to design a [rain] garden,” Distel said. “A rain garden is a garden that absorbs and purifies rainwater run-off.”

Approximately 130 students will collaborate and participate in this project, according to Distel.

“It’s going to be this third trimester’s environmental science classes [who create the rain garden],” Distel said. “I will pick one top group from each class to present their designs to a panel...who will vote on the top two. We will actually build those gardens.”

Instead of just talking about doing things to positively affect the community, Distel said her number one objective is to get students out learning and making a difference.

“[The project] won’t just benefit students here, it could benefit the whole

community by cleaning Mason’s rainwater,” Distel said.

Distel said the grant will help to make her vision for the environmental science class a reality.

“I would love to not have any desks or chairs,” Distel said. “I want to go outside, to pick up a soil sample and say, ‘Let’s talk about what’s in this, how it’s affecting us and what we can do about it.’ [It’s about] taking traditional education to a different level.”

A second grant, presented by the Mason Schools Foundation, will make learning come alive for support education students this winter, according to masonohioschools.com. Michael Planicka, Mason High School Support Education teacher, will use the \$450 to purchase the “Veggie U” system, a curriculum from a farm in Milan, Ohio.

“[Veggie U] is a program designed to teach kids how to raise their own food,” Planicka said.

The curriculum, that comes with workbooks, grow-lights, seeds and soil, exhibits the type of hands on learning that fits students in his Applied Science classes best, according to Planicka.

“It will really give them a chance to see the whole start and ending life cycle of growing something,” Planicka said.

With the Veggie U system, students will be able to grow vegetables in the classroom, instead of waiting until spring to go outside, according to Planicka.

Planicka said his main vision for the Veggie U system is getting his students



outside, and to have a garden to maintain somewhere on campus. According to Planicka, the students will get to bite into the results, literally.

“[The vegetables] will grow quickly and [the students] can eat them,” Planicka said. “At the end [of the Veggie U curriculum] we’re also going to serve food to...staff members.”

Learning is important, but according to Planicka, the emphasis is on fun.

“I want them to have something that really gets their noses out of the textbook,” Planicka said. “I want them to see where their food comes from, and to discover and learn as much as they can. I really hope they have fun.”