

Local teachers receive grants from JoCo Foundation

By Ruth Longoria Kingsland
of the Daily Courier

Learning about the cycle of life by dissecting owl poop may be disgusting to some. For Fruitdale Elementary fifth grade teacher Heather Sheehan, undigested mouse skeletons and fur are part of the fascinating educational process.

Sheehan is one of 14 local teachers selected to receive grants this year by the Josephine County Foundation. The foundation's annual awards ceremony is at 5 p.m. tonight at the Taprock Northwest Grill in downtown Grants Pass.

The grant Sheehan receives will allow her and fellow fifth-grade teacher Penny Ross (who started the owl project at the school) to purchase owl pellets from a science company and also purchase two Chromebooks, one for each class, to allow students to research owls and create their own projects and slide shows from the research.

It also will help pay to have Wildlife Images return this year with a few owls to allow for hands-on owl study.

Wildlife Images brought four owls to Fruitdale last year and that really enhanced the owl studies, Sheehan said.

"I'm very grateful to the Josephine County Foundation for letting teachers be creative and providing us with ways to engage kids in the classroom,"

Josephine County Foundation Award recipients

- Heather Sheehan, Fruitdale Elementary School, \$700 for an owl observatory
- Aaron Skinner, Illinois Valley High School, \$1,000 for the "Every 15 Minutes" project
- Leslie Henriquez, Merlin Alternative Center, \$500 for the class library
- Cindy Bohannon, Fruitdale Elementary School, \$1,000 for the third grade music program
- James Platt, North Middle School, \$712 for the martial arts program
- Kaye Paulson, Fruitdale Elementary School, \$1,000 for an author visit
- Tanya Ferguson, North Middle School, \$670, for media tech
- Michael Herzog, Merlin Alternative Center, \$1,000, for a greenhouse
- Jim Kriz, Manzanita Elementary School, \$1,000 for team problem solving
- Heather Ransom, South Middle School, \$991, for the anti-bullying program
- Paul Williams, Allen Dale Elementary School, \$427 for step aerobics
- Vicki Van Manen, Riverside Elementary School, \$1,000 for the PALS program
- Jeromy Wright, North Valley High School, \$1,000, for the drum class
- Gary Lathen, Hidden Valley High School, \$2,000 for calculators

she said.

The Josephine County Foundation is an entrepreneurial and philanthropic group of students formed in 2011 at Hidden Valley High School. It has since grown to include representatives from five high schools in the area: Hidden Valley, Illinois Valley North Valley, Grants Pass and New Hope Christian School.

Students raise money throughout the year and use those funds to offer dental and vision clinics and scholarships, in addition to the teacher grants.

The foundation recently received status as a 501(c)3 nonprofit.

This is the second year that the Josephine County Foundation has awarded grants to

local teachers who submit projects they'd like to try or items they need for their class.

Last year, 11 grants totaling \$11,000 were awarded to teachers in the Grants Pass and Three Rivers school districts.

This year, \$13,000 in grants will be awarded to the 14 selected teachers.

In addition to teacher grants, the foundation will award to Asante's Connie Fiske Memorial Fund \$1,425 that North Valley students raised in October during its Pink Week for cancer awareness.

Another \$7,500 will be awarded to the three Three Rivers high schools for setting up Campus Closets in those schools to provide food and clothing for students in need.

Besides raising the money for the grants and other projects, students involved in the foundation selected the recipients for the awards.

Devin Pine, a sophomore at Hidden Valley High school, said that "handing out this money is important to me because we are changing the students of this area's future. We are bringing them exciting new ways to learn and to experience in the classroom."

Pine said his favorite grant application was for Illinois Valley High School's "Every 15 Minutes" program.

That program attempts to teach students about the hazards of drinking and driving.



Fruitdale Elementary School students learn about owls through an owl observatory that will be financed with a grant from the Josephine County Foundation. Pictured are Wildlife Images staff with Fruitdale students (left to right) in front row: Ulalume Mancuso, Nevin Fullerton, and Emely Arras, and (middle row left to right): Frank Rossi, Kaylie Cuzick, and Nytasha Hetman.