

## Three teachers awarded county foundation grants

By SCOTT RAWDON

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The Licking County Foundation is helping three Licking Heights teachers go the extra mile -- one of them quite literally -- for their students.

Licking Heights South Elementary art teacher Mandy Rubio and Licking Heights Central eighth-grade science teacher Michael Kinney each were awarded \$500 through the Leaders for Learning Grant and Licking Heights Central seventh-grade language-arts teacher Kristin Graham received \$800 through the Tibbie Leslie Travel Grant.

Rubino said she would use her grant money for visual problem-solving activities.

"The grant allows me to purchase enough clay, ceramic glazes and other sculpting tools for all of my third- and fourth-grade art classes," Rubio said. "Without the generosity of the grant, I'd have to stretch my art budget to afford enough clay for my students."

Rubio said her students, using clay, would transform two-dimensional drawings into three-dimensional sculptures, relying on visual problem-solving and a variety of construction techniques.

The project aligns with the Ohio Visual Arts Standard, which requires students to generate ideas and employ a variety of strategies to solve visual problems.

"Using clay to sculpt and make art enriches our study of art and artists throughout history and around the world," Rubio said. "It utilizes problem-solving skills, as well as visual-spatial awareness."

Kinney said he also would use his grant money for hands-on activities.

"The grant will allow me to bring additional laboratory experiments and demonstrations into our classroom," Kinney said. "I focused much of the money toward chemistry and physics purchases. Since chemistry was not something that we had done at the middle school level before, I did not have many of the supplies needed to have students complete as many hands-on labs as I would have liked."

Kinney said in-depth, hands-on opportunities are important for students to learn the required content.

"Since there is only so much learning that can be done from a book, having resources that allow students to identify reaction types, observe properties of materials and conduct flame tests is not only engaging but invaluable," he said.

Graham's grant money helped her gain a new cultural perspective to share with her Licking Heights students.

"This helps my students understand that people from around the world aren't that much different than they are," Graham said.

She spent two weeks teaching at Hjoerring Private Realskole in Denmark.

Graham visited local schools, attended school meetings and lived in a private Danish home.

During the exchange program, she observed the Danish education system while working closely with Danish teachers and students.

Upon her return, Graham created a pen-pal program between the Danish students and her Licking Heights students.

"The Danish kids are still learning English," Graham said.

She said writing in English and exchanging cultures has been as much of a learning experience for the Danish students as her own, who are learning to write clearly and simply for their Danish counterparts.

"My students are understanding that they'll be writing for the rest of their lives," she said.