

By Naomi Schmitt

Perkins County High School

Members of Mr. King's biology and anatomy classes probably already know about a dozen new additions to the high school science program this year, but the rest of the community may be left out of focus and in the dark about this subject (kind of like the old microscopes).

Mr. King received several grants to pay for 12 new, digital binocular compound microscopes, which are research lab quality and brand new. Each microscope also has a removable digital camera.

One of these grants was the Applegate Grant which is funded through the Mid-Nebraska Community Foundation. Mr. King tells his students that, "It is designed to provide teachers with funding for projects in the classroom or with special training. They have a real focus on technology in the classroom, which the digital microscope project certainly fit." He received \$2,500 from the Applegate Grant to help pay for the microscopes.

The Perkins County Community Foundation gave \$1,500 towards paying for the microscopes. Mr. King was one of the first recipients of this PCCF Grant whose mission is "to provide funding for projects which better the community and education." The Perkins County Schools Foundation donated \$500. Mr. King said that Perkins County Schools provided the seed money and support for the project.

One of the reasons for getting new microscopes was that the newest ones the school had were from the 1970s (older than Mr. King!) and were becoming worn out from at least two generations of usage. Mr. King also said, "A few would not maintain focus {and} all had scratched lenses." The new microscopes fix all the problems and "take us into the digital age."

The digital camera is also a very useful item to help with teaching and learning, "By having a removable digital camera, students can link them to their school computers and view the images in detail, capture the image and attach it to a lab report. The other great thing is now I can point to a computer screen and everyone can see what I am talking about, instead of each taking turns looking through the lens and hoping everyone sees the same thing," Mr. King said. He notes that there are a few things to be worked out yet, but he is confident that they will get everything working smoothly soon.

Mr. King appreciates the help he received for the project. Grants for the project were supplied by the Perkins County Community Foundation and the Perkins County Schools Foundation. Final funding support came from the John Russell Applegate Fund for Teachers at Mid-Nebraska Community Foundation, based in North Platte. Without these generous organizations, this project would not have been successful.