

Storer scholarship aims to aid success

By Erik Gantt

The George B. Storer Foundation provided funding for four University of Wyoming (UW) College of Education students to participate in the Teton Science School's (TSS) Carbon 2 Science Summer School. The Storer Foundation has partnered with TSS for five years to support learning about local environments and economies, specifically based on hands-on experiences.

With tears in her eyes, Storer scholar Rhonda Kraus said "Personally, I got so much more out of this than the Storer Foundation could ever get." She is a cancer survivor and appreciates the opportunity she was provided, given what it took her to get here.

Kraus was one of three UW undergraduate students, including Randi Prosenick and Joe Ahlstrom along with graduate student Gina Graziano who participated in the Carbon County School District No. 2 (CCSD#2) program.

Kraus learned of the Storer grant from a friend who was a Storer Scholar last year and participated in the CCSD#2

program and thought it was advantageous for her program. Kraus is in her last year at UW and hopes to get a kindergarten through second grade position in the Natrona County area. She is not a Wyoming native and has learned an immense amount about the state and its resources through the program.

According to Kraus "The kids are so naturally intuitive to science. In classrooms today, so many times, you hear the teachers say they don't have time for science in the younger grades, but that's when we need to capture them."

Ahlstrom hopes to take the place-based education aspect of TSS into his teaching career and give kids a different, outdoor-focused perspective on education while fulfilling the standards of a traditional education. He noted that the school he plans to teach at already works with the TSS program. Stand-out moments for Ahlstrom included the fishing portions of the week and hunting for agates and petrified wood. "Fishing ... is more

than just education, I hope those kids gained an experience ... it's about having a personal, fun activity, or something recreational and that's where kids start to learn more and have an appreciation for the outdoors," said Ahlstrom.

The Storer Foundation works in conjunction with the TSS Teacher Learning Center (TLC) to support place-based education teacher workshops held at the TSS Jackson campus, and the one-week CCSD#2 summer science program.

The Foundation supports projects that demonstrate the following strategies: improving teacher quality, facilitating the sharing of best practices and using place as an integrating context for learning.

Kathleen Doffermyre, Program Officer for the Storer Foundation, said, "We think that in a state that has natural resources like Wyoming it makes no sense for students to be learning about the rainforest, they should be learning about their own backyard. It's more compelling and you can do more hands on if you are learning in your place." That's



Photo by Erik Gantt

Storer Scholar Joe Ahlstrom teaches CCSD#2 students about fishing before they start casting at a pond on Cedar Creek Ranch.

not to say the rainforest isn't important, but students in Wyoming should learn about where they live first.

Also important to the Storer Foundation is giving back to the state by supporting local programs like the Summer Science School in Saratoga. "We love the

Saratoga Valley," said Doffermyre.

The undergraduate students received a \$2,500 stipend and Graziano was given a \$3,000 stipend. Lodging and food expenses for the TLC training program and the week in Saratoga were provided by TSS.