

## **Foundation Grant Winner Honored with National Award**

An innovative science teacher at Overland High School, who won a grant from the Cherry Creek Schools Foundation last spring, can add another notch to her belt.

Jennifer Nass-Fukai, science coordinator at Overland High School, was recently named a 2011 winner of the Amgen Award for Science Teaching Excellence. She will receive an unrestricted cash award of \$5,000 and a restricted grant of \$5,000 for her school, to be used for the professional development of science teachers, the expansion or enhancement of science programs, or science resources.

Last spring, Nass-Fukai won an Educator Initiative Grant from the Cherry Creek Schools Foundation. The grant helped fund access to sophisticated data collection technology for her biology and environmental science students. The technology allows students to conduct inquiries around the interdependence of organisms, photosynthesis and cellular respiration.

"We want to congratulate Jennifer on her honor," said the Foundation's Executive DirectorCarolynn Erickson. "We saw excellence in her grant proposal to us, I'm not surprised that she impressed the Amgen Award judges as well."

Nass-Fukai is one of 34 Amgen Award recipients across the country. They were selected by an independent panel of judges on the basis of creativity of teaching methods; effectiveness in the classroom; and plans for the use of grant money to improve science education resources in their schools. All have demonstrated an outstanding ability to inspire their students and produce results in science education.

Nass-Fukai, who holds a PhD in Entomology with a minor in Teaching and Teacher Education, brings real-life science experience to her students. She has been an educator for 13 years, but previously worked as a university laboratory scientist in both biochemistry and medical entomology labs.

"I know what it looks like when 'authentic science' is going on," she said. "This grant money will allow us to take our science program from the school level to the professional level and give all of our students an authentic science experience. They'll get to see what science is really like and it may ignite a passion in them."

The grant money will be invested in Vernier Probeware, state-of-the-art equipment that will allow students to collect and analyze a wide variety of data, such as temperature, pH balance, dissolved oxygen or carbon dioxide, even heart rate and blood pressure.

"This will provide a much more powerful model than just doing problems out of a book," said Nass-Fukai.

The Amgen Award comes at an exciting time for Nass-Fukai and the Overland High School community, which is looking forward to the August opening of the Institute for Science and Technology, located on the Overland and Prairie Middle School campus. The high tech facility will provide additional opportunities for all Overland and Prairie students to study science, technology, engineering and mathematics, or STEM fields.

The Cherry Creek Schools Foundation is raising funds to populate the facility with state-of-the-art technology and equipment to provide students with authentic STEM experiences.

The 58,000-square-foot center will serve 6th through 12th graders.

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