

# The Imperial Republican

## Diffendal: One dedicated scientist

By CAROLYN LEE  
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The recent SCORE (Science Camps Offer Rewarding Experiences) camp in Imperial welcomed back many familiar faces as presenters.

One of the most faithful is Dr. Robert F. Diffendal, Jr., who has attended 25 out of the 27 camps.

The 74-year-old is a geologist and Professor Emeritus of the Conservation and Survey Division, School of Natural Resources, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

He is also a Licensed Professional Geologist and Curator of Invertebrate Paleontology for the University of Nebraska State Museum.

During the grade 1-4 SCORE camp, Dr. Diffendal spread out an array of mollusks, bringing a form of life to children who hadn't seen squid and its relatives before.

The children were fascinated by the way Dr. Diffendal brought rocks and fossils to life for them. They gathered around, asking



Dr. Robert Diffendal explains mollusks. (Republican photo)

many questions and receiving many answers.

Over the years Dr. Diffendal has addressed geology, mineral identification and plant and animal fossils. One year he took a group of students to Enders Reservoir to study the Ogallala rock

layers, collecting fossil roots and seeds along the way.

"I'll do anything on geology," he said of his teaching.

He's taught students at Chase County Schools about the Ogallala Aquifer and its geology in the past, as well as at SCORE camp.

Dr. Diffendal missed one year at SCORE because he was in China. He has been an exchange professor in the Department of Geology at Zhongshan University in Guangzhou several times.

He has also been a guest and visiting professor at other Chinese universities, as well as a lecturer.

At present the scientist has just completed a draft of a children's coloring and activities book and a parents' guide to the fossil animals and plants depicted in the mosaics on the floor of the Nebraska State Capitol in Lincoln.

Dr. Diffendal also participates in the Lincoln County Extension program each May in which school students take a one-day field trip called Water

Riches.

This year he took fourth grade students from Perkins County, South Platte and Ogallala schools to Cedar Point Biological Station near Lake McConaughy.

"They hear these big names and don't know what it's all about," he explained, so he shows them about the Ogallala Aquifer and more.

Dr. Diffendal plans to keep on teaching. "I'll do it as long as my health holds out." He is also involved with the Chancellor's Speakers Bureau in Lincoln.

"It keeps me out of the house," he smiled, although wife Dr. Anne Diffendal accompanies him on many of his trips. She holds a PhD in history and is an archivist with the State Historical Society.

When Dr. Diffendal said "good-bye" to students and fellow educators after this year's SCORE camp, he added that he hopes to see them next time around.

"He's a great ambassador for the SCORE program," Director Marla Smith noted.

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