

SHOPA Kids in Need Foundation awards grant to Mounds teacher

DAYTON, OH - Office Depot, through the SHOPA Kids In Need Foundation, a national charitable education organization, has approved to fund the classroom project of William Ferguson, a special education teacher at Mounds High School. Mr. Ferguson was one of 259 teachers to receive funding this year, chosen from a field of 2,500 applications nationwide.

"The intent of the grants is to offer educators the opportunity to teach original, innovative projects for which no other funding is available," said Kathy Spencer, executive director of the SHOPA Kids In Need Foundation. "As part of our mission, we are providing educators the funds to conduct special lessons that they often pay for out of their own pockets if they want to present them to their students. The grants not only alleviate the financial burden on the teachers but will benefit children by supporting their classroom learning experiences."

Kindergarten through twelfth grade teachers of any subject in public, private, and parochial schools are eligible to apply for the Kids In Need Teacher Grants. Grant amounts are between \$100 and \$500. Mr. Ferguson requested and received \$200.

"Breakfast in America" was designed by Ferguson as a life skills lesson for special education students. His students were given the \$200 grant money and told to budget meals for a family of four for one week. The students had to plan the meals based on the new Food Pyramid, shop for the food, prepare it, and then submit the dishes to their classmates for review.

Afterwards, the students used the internet to determine how much the same food items would cost in six other American cities in different parts of the country. They had to include the local sales tax in each city.

"This was an excellent opportunity to give my students the kind of real-world experience that all students, especially exceptional needs students, need to be productive participants in our society," Ferguson said. "SHOPA Kids and Office Depot have shown foresight in recognizing that all of our kids [need] to be educated to be smart consumers and to make healthy choices. As a teacher, I appreciate that."

The Kids In Need Teacher Grants are offered nationwide through several sponsoring retail chains and education credit unions that support the program through financial donations and back-to-school promotions.

Ron Costello, PhD, is chair of the Foundation's Teachers Grants Committee. He says the Committee "looks for high quality projects that convey information to students in new and interesting ways. We evaluate the grant requests according to certain criteria, and the proposals that make Committee members feel they would like to be in the classrooms participating in those projects are the ones that are invariably funded."

Lesson plans of funded projects are published by the Foundation in its *Best Practices Guide*, the Foundation's way of getting these good ideas out to other teachers. The *Guide* is available on the Kids In Need website, www.kidsinneed.net. Ferguson's project will be among these published in the next year's edition.

The SHOPA Kids In Need Foundation is affiliated with the School, Home, and Office Products Association (SHOPA). In addition to the Teacher Grants program, the SHOPA Kids In Need Foundation supports 21 Kids In Need Resource Centers nationwide, where teachers can get free school supplies to equip impoverished children with the tools they need to succeed in school. The school supplies are donated by SHOPA member companies and other school supplies and arts and crafts manufacturers. The supplies are available at no cost to the schools, teachers, or students. ■