

"I Touched the Future" Recognition Award

5/19/2014

Dear Dr. Riker,

It is with much enthusiasm that I would like to nominate Mr. Mark Atwood, retired gifted teacher, and former science teacher in the Nazareth Area School District to receive the 'I Touched the Future' Award.

For many years I witnessed Mark's tireless energy as he encouraged and exposed students in new ways to science and technology. When I served on the Nazareth Area Science Project, a large science fair was held each year at Bushkill Elementary School. Mark Atwood was there each year, supporting the efforts to bring hands-on science to children (and adults) of all ages. His various presentations were always interactive and exciting. Mark also worked with me to begin the first Science Olympiad team for the middle school.

While a teacher, many times Mark would arrange Saturday outings for anyone who wanted to go with him to explore science in fun ways. He organized students with their parents to carpool to a Delaware beach for the day to participate in a horseshoe crab count, invited others to join in fossil hunts, and shared his enthusiasm for astronomy by bringing others out to look at constellations on clear nights. His interests were always shared with his students, keeping science alive and enticing. Many times Mark would be gathering students and helping them make pinhole cameras, build and shoot off rockets, explore bike gears, ...on his own time to help young people enjoy the world of science.

He shared his expertise with other professionals as well, by presenting at NSTA science conventions many times, and served as a resource on various committees. If any fellow teacher was working on a project, Mark would usually come into school with a gadget, an idea, or something he was willing to share to help a lesson.

Mark was constantly giving to our students and our district. Anyone who was in Nazareth in the year 2000 would remember him raising money for the NAHS planetarium by biking 45 days across the country; leaving from Graford, Washington and ending in Lewes, Delaware. The Nazareth Library had a link to follow Mr. Atwood's journey to keep the community updated.

On a personal note Mark has been a dear friend. During my lung surgery in 2007, Mark spread the word and asked teachers if they wanted to make dinner for me and my family so we didn't have to cook while I recovered. He organized a list for sign ups. I did not have to cook for two and a half months after surgery. Every other day, the meals (including desserts), were brought to my door by a smiling colleague. I will never forget what that meant to me.

Mark gives to the community in many ways with his wife Linda (even hosting refugees from church in their home).

I feel that Mark Atwood has certainly "Touched the Future" in the Nazareth Area School District and in the Nazareth community, and continues to do so.

Celia Szuba