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Teacher receives national award

Thursday, August 10, 2006

The National Association of Biology Teachers, in conjunction with Prentice Hall and Connecticut Valley Biological Supply, is presented Brian Dempsey with the year 2006 Outstanding Biology Teacher Award.

This honor, given annually since 1961, identifies a teacher from each of the United States, its possessions, and Canada who has made valuable contributions to the profession and to his/her students. Criteria for the award include teaching ability, experience, inventiveness, initiative, inherent teaching strengths and cooperativeness in the school and community.

Dempsey has been a teacher at Acton-Boxborough Regional High School since 1996. He earned his BA, cum laude, in anthropology from the University of Massachusetts in 1996. He has worked as a lab assistant for Professor Lynn Margulis at UMass and as a staff member in the Microcosmos Project at Boston University. He has also worked as an intern and science demonstrator at the Museum of Science in Boston, and is working in Professor David Hibbett's Mycology lab at Clark University during the summer of 2006.

Dempsey's passion for biology teaching is exhibited in all levels of his biology classes, from his after school class with "at-risk" students to his two Advanced Placement classes. The at-risk class is done in addition to his five regularly assigned classes at Acton-Boxborough High School. He deftly involves his biology students in inquiry discussions using creative PowerPoint and classroom demonstrations. One of his PowerPoint presentations creatively contrasted how the brain develops into an organized neural network with how the street plans of ancient cities in Peru and Italy developed according to the needs of the inhabitants at various times. During a classroom demonstration on vision, Dempsey displayed a bottle containing a dissected sheep's eye that he had saved from when he was a high school student. This conformed to his students how committed he is to the teaching of biology.

Dempsey's outreach extends beyond his classroom. He has coached the Science Team at Acton-Boxborough Regional High School for the Science Olympiad science 1997. His team won State Championships in 2005 and 2006. He has also won awards with his Envirothon Team, which he has coached since 2001. Dempsey has found time to make several presentations at Massachusetts Biology Teacher State Conventions over the past few years. He presently volunteers for the Massachusetts Association of Biology Teachers as editor for the MABT Alert online newsletter sent out to update all MABT members of recent and future events in biology.

Dempsey will be presented his OBTA with the other OBTA recipients from the 50 states at a special Honors Luncheon at the NABT national convention in Albuquerque, N.M., on Oct. 13.

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