

Social studies teacher gets teens to give back

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John Naisbitt

Hinsdale Central High School

John Naisbitt's benevolence rubs off on his students daily.

The Hinsdale Central social studies teacher and Golden Apple finalist is always thinking about ways to help people — not only in his classroom, but all around the world.

And in his own unique way, he gets students wrapped around international projects as well.

While teaching United States history and Advanced Placement European History, this school year he managed to reach out to children in Afghanistan and Africa.

After being informed about the numerous suffering children in Afghanistan by his brother, who's in the U.S. Air Force stationed in Afghanistan, Naisbitt felt a deep desire to help.

Last semester he collected 365 boxes of supplies to help children. The donations consisted of two tons of medical and school items, clothing and blankets.

Everything was sent to Naisbitt's brother, who distributed the supplies to villagers in eastern Afghanistan.

"The current situation in Afghanistan is newsworthy, and we talk about it, so this was a way to allow the students to do something about it," he said, "to do something to support the American troops in their effort to help the Afghanis and Iraqis."

Naisbitt's latest project involves helping the 3,000 African children who die from malaria every day.

He heard about the problem on the radio and didn't think twice about helping out.

Through a 3-on-3 basketball tournament, he plans to raise funds that will go to Nothing But Nets, an organization that provides bed nets for children to prevent mosquitoes from biting them when they sleep.

"Once you hear something, you just have to do something, don't you?" he said.

Naisbitt, 44, of Woodridge, said he gets a lot of energy from the teenagers he teaches.

"They're just really willing, compassionate and very resourceful students," he said. "If you can tap into that, you've got yourself a real power house."

He's also humbly proud of being a Golden Apple finalist.

"I represent Hinsdale Central teachers," he said. "There are so many great teachers here that could be in the same place that I am."