

Portland Educator Wins Second Place in National Award for Innovative Teaching Program

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The ING Unsung Heroes(R) Program Has Awarded Over \$2.5 Million to Educators Across the U.S.



(Left to right: Tim Kadlec, Regional Manager, ING U.S. Financial Services; Brian Smithers, Teacher and ING Unsung Hero, Open Meadow Middle School; Michael Adams, Financial Advisor, ING U.S. Financial Services; Andrew Mason, Executive Director, Open Meadow Alternative Schools)

ATLANTA and PORTLAND, Ore., Aug. 29 /PRNewswire/ -- Each day in classrooms across the country, educators work hard to develop creative lesson plans and offer unique and effective ways to help their students succeed -- often times dipping into their own pockets to help fund projects. However, these efforts may go unnoticed outside the classroom walls. ING, a global financial services company, has taken notice of these "unsung heroes" for more than a decade and is committed to recognizing and rewarding educators for their hard work.

One of them, Brian Smithers, a teacher at Open Meadow Middle School, was recently recognized as one of the nation's most innovative educators in the 2006 ING Unsung Heroes® awards program. Smithers was one of 100 winners who received a \$2,000 award to help fund his innovative idea and bring it to life in the classroom. He then went on to take the honor of winning the second place prize of an additional \$10,000 making it a grand total of \$12,000 to help fund his program idea at his school.

The ING Unsung Heroes awards program recognizes kindergarten through 12th grade educators nationwide for their innovative teaching methods, creative educational projects, and ability to make a positive influence on the children they teach. Since handing out the first award in 1996, the program has now awarded more than \$2.5 million to more than 1000 educators across the United States. The 2006 ING Unsung Heroes winners were selected from a group of more than 1,100 applications.

Students often study the environment in science classes but rarely have the opportunity to personally impact it. Smithers' program, "Waste Not, Want Not: Making Vegetable Bio-fuel from Waste Vegetable Oil," gives at-risk participants in grades sixth through eighth, a chance to develop a usable alternate fuel. This past year at Open Meadow Middle School, his students began making

small batches of bio-diesel in the classroom. After developing a processor to handle the production of larger quantities of the bio-diesel, the students made 135 gallons of the fuel. The idea behind the project for the 2006-2007 school year is to make enough fuel to replace all of the school's unleaded fuel vehicles with those operated by diesel fuel. Smithers and his class want to reduce the amount of fossil fuels that the school consumes. He and his students will also examine ways to sell the surplus fuel. This will demonstrate the importance of scientific innovation and its economic benefits. Smithers resides in Portland.

"Brian's creativity in teaching is inspired by his vision of a world that honors its young people and natural resources," said Andrew Mason, executive director of Open Meadow Alternative Schools. "His vision is fueled by a contagious spunk and energy that reaches even the toughest of students. Open Meadow is proud to have Brian as a member of the team and deeply appreciative of the recognition that he is deservedly receiving from ING through its Unsung Heroes program."

"ING is proud to honor educators like Brian Smithers as they strive to make a difference in the lives of America's schoolchildren," said Bill Jasien, senior vice president of ING U.S. Financial Services. "Our company is committed to education, and at the heart of it are teachers who work tirelessly and go above and beyond in their dedication to our youth. ING is honored to award these teachers across the United States and to be a part of building a strong foundation for our future leaders of tomorrow."

To learn about this year's winning projects, as well as those from previous years, visit the ING Unsung Heroes website at www.ing.com/us/unsungheroes. Applications for the 2007 ING Unsung Heroes awards are available by calling 1 (800) 537-4180 or emailing ing@scholarshipamerica.org.

About ING

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Currently, ING holds top-tier rankings in key U.S. markets and serves more than 15 million customers across the nation. For more information, visit www.ing.com.

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