



Sixth grade social studies teacher at Lake Zurich Middle School North Daniel Morvaji, center, holds up a tray of apples after receiving a 2008 Golden Apple award Wednesday to the delight of his students.

Paul Valade | Staff Photographer

A golden moment for District 95 teacher

By Madhu Krishnamurthy | Daily Herald Staff

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When he saw the basket of red apples coming his way, Daniel Morvaji knew the moment he had been secretly hoping for had come true.

Exclaiming "Wow!" and "Thank you," Morvaji stood atop his classroom cabinets unable to contain his excitement.

The sixth-grade social studies teacher from Lakemoor was surprised with the Golden Apple Award this morning at Lake Zurich Middle School North in Hawthorn Woods.

"All my students come with me. Who wants an apple?" a beaming Morvaji asked holding the basket in one hand as students gathered around him cheering and "woo-hooing."

Morvaji is among 10 Illinois winners of the 2008 Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching for fourth through eighth grades. He was selected out of 850 teachers from Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake and Will counties nominated for the award.

It's a crowning achievement for Lake Zurich District 95, which never before has won a Golden Apple Award.

"This is our first," said Middle School North Principal Nate Carter. "This is not just a wonderful achievement for Dan but an achievement for staff and the learning community. He's touched a lot of young peoples' lives in such a special way."

Golden Apple Foundation representatives said Morvaji's hands-on teaching techniques and methods of engaging the classroom earned him the award.

He gets students involved in making videos of classroom activities, costumes and participating in life-like presentations and re-enacting history.

"He's very creative," said Phyllis O'Connell, a past Golden Apple Award recipient who interviewed Morvaji, his students, colleagues and parents earlier in the year after he was nominated. "You can see how the students respond to him. Kids can't help but be drawn into it. He brings it alive. Most importantly, he expresses to them their own need to be responsible for what they learn."

Each of the 10 Golden Apple Award recipients will get a tuition-free spring-term sabbatical at Northwestern University, a personal computer from IBM, \$3,000 and membership in the Golden Apple Academy of Educators, which has inducted 220 teachers.

Award winners will be honored at a ceremony Sept. 6 at the Hyatt Regency Chicago to be aired as a one-hour prime-time special on WTTW Channel 11.