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Reed's dedication to teaching physics a golden effort

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By **NATALIE HAYES** Contributor

To say he is passionate about his job would be an understatement.

For the past 13 years, Niles North High School physics teacher Scott Reed has lived and breathed teaching. For Reed, teaching isn't a job -- it's his life.

His love for his career radiates in his teaching. He somehow manages to get a class of 40 students excited about learning physics. Fifty-nine students even joined Reed's physics club, Phantastic, that meets outside of normal class hours.

"You can tell this is his life's passion, and you can really see that in the way he teaches," said Olga Pototskaya, one of Reed's students. "He's always willing to be there for us, to talk to us -- there's never been a time when he's been too busy."

Last week, Reed received the surprise of a lifetime when former Chicago Bull Sidney Green joined Reed's family and friends to present him with the Golden Apple Award, one of education's most notable achievements. Reed was one of 10 teachers in Illinois chosen from 562 nominees.

His students held back tears as Reed accepted the award May 13 in a classroom packed with colleagues, school officials, his parents, wife and three children.

This isn't the first time Reed has been recognized by Golden Apple. In 2007, he received the Teacher of Distinction Award, which is given to strong candidates who didn't make the final round.

Fifteen years ago before Reed discovered teaching, he unhappily sat behind his desk at his first job after college as an engineer.

"I hated sitting behind a desk," Reed said. "I wasn't getting excited about the opportunities that my co-workers were loving. I realized that what I liked most were the teaching aspects of the job and interacting with people."

So Reed left his job, and returned to the University of Illinois in Champaign to get a masters degree in education. Two years later Reed was teaching his first class at Niles North High School and finally doing what he loved.

When asked what drives him each day, the answer is simple for Reed: his students.

"I really enjoy giving students the opportunity to explore physics and have a passion for it like I do," Reed said. "As long as I'm teaching, I'm happy."

There isn't a boring day in Reed's classroom, where the focus is always hands-on learning.

"My students inspire me to do all that I absolutely can to guide them to being better people and scientists," Reed said. "There is a deep mutual love and respect that my students and I share for each other -- my students make everyday fun for me and I in turn make everyday fun and meaningful for them by giving them opportunities to explore, create and apply what they are learning," he added.

Besides being an excellent teacher, co-workers and students agree he is just a great person to be around and describe him as kind, intelligent and dedicated to his profession.

Physics teacher Harry Kyriazes has shared an office with Reed for the past 13 years, and said working with Reed makes going to work fun.

"Everyone in the school thinks highly of him and has a great respect for his teaching," Kyriazes said. "He's a natural, kind of like the Michael Jordan of teachers ... he has the natural talent and passion for the job, and he dedicates all his time to what he does."

Reed's award includes a tuition-free six month sabbatical to study at [Northwestern University](#), \$3,000 cash, and

entry into the Golden Apple Academy of Educators, a non-profit organization dedicated to excellence in education.

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