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Village Beacon Record News

## Man of the Year in Education: Kevin Mann

Teens making a difference globally, thanks to him

By Caitlin Ferrell

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Kevin Mann, far left, with members of the Global Awareness Club in Kenya in February. Photo from K. Mann

Village Beacon Record  
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In 1983, during a famine in Ethiopia, two students at Shoreham-Wading River High School decided to start a club to tackle global issues. Social studies teacher Kevin Mann was their faculty advisor and he has overseen the club ever since.

His work with children affected by HIV/AIDS in Kenya and his push to involve Shoreham-Wading River students in the global effort are reasons Mann has been named The Village Beacon Record's Man of the Year in Education.

Mann is not a person who calls attention to himself. Principal Daniel Holtzman said, "He doesn't do a thing for recognition. He is a very selfless person."

Students and administrators praise his perseverance and leadership.

Julie Lindell, a junior student who traveled to Kenya with the global club last year, wrote in an email message, "He seems to work harder for others than he does for himself. When something needs to get done, he makes sure it gets done."

Lindell added, "He has taught the students in his classes and members of the global club valuable life skills."

Samantha Lacovara, a senior, said, "He's a very hands-on leader. He's very involved."

Harriet Copel, who worked as the Shoreham-Wading River schools'

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superintendent from August 2005 to 2011, said the Global Awareness Club allows students to learn about the world and gain perspective. "What a difference it's made in their lives," Copel said. "He really takes it to another level."

In the first years of the global awareness club, Mann recalled students working with the United Nations embassies on diplomatic issues.

Originally called the East-West Friendship Association, the group involved students in hosting Palestinian and Israeli government leaders at the school to discuss their political views. That was obviously in a pre-Sept. 11 world, Mann said, adding that the leaders would be in separate rooms and plainclothes police officers were at the school that day.

"They've done a lot of things outside the box over the years, that most students wouldn't do, let alone high school students," Mann said. "The mission has kind of morphed with world conditions. They continue to do some interesting things."

Today, the group works often with Hope Children's Fund and Habitat for Humanity. Students sell pizza every Wednesday and Thursday after school to raise money. A collection bin in the high school parking lot, painted with a mural by students, collects school supplies, clothing and medical supplies to ship to Kenya. Students sell Kenyan crafts and send money back. An annual bicontinental run raises money. And a more recent tradition has been an annual trip to Kenya to visit the orphanage that students are helping to expand.

"The students in the club have been involved with the work on the orphanage since it was an idea around the table," Mann said. The orphanage, which was the brainchild between Hope Children's Fund and a former student in Africa, opened in 2005 to 18 children, Mann said, and some Shoreham-Wading River students now mentor kids there. The orphanage was built for children who had lost parents to the AIDS pandemic, and attendance is growing.

Samantha Lacovara, who mentors a 6 year old at the orphanage and has traveled to Kenya with the group twice before, recalled that the group helped the orphanage to acquire a plot of farmland.

"By buying the farmland, we're making them self-sufficient," Lacovara said, adding that it is the Kenyan people who pay the electricity and other costs.

The global club helped the orphanage to open a technical training program last year, including tailoring and woodcarving. The technical school is an alternative to secondary school in

Kenya, which is cost-prohibitive for most children.

This year, Mann expects to bring 18 or 19 students with him to Kenya. Last year, eight students went. The year before that, it was four.

Mann, who has taught at Shoreham-Wading River since the high school opened in 1974, today teaches community relations, economics and participation in governments.

Anya Uzo, a global club member, said, "Kids say, 'The school was built around Mr. Mann.'"

Principal Holtzman described Mann as a genuine, honest person. "He does things for the greater good," Holtzman said.

"He's in it for all the right reasons," Copel said.

"He's sort of like an elephant. He's very wise, he remembers everything," Uzo said, adding that Mann wears an elephant necklace. "He always has something to bring to the table. He's definitely passionate about what he