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BEST Organization Hosts First Research Symposium

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DANIEL HESLOP

Brent Geraty, Andrews Academy Board chair (left), presented the Alumni Award for Excellence in Education to Steven Atkins (right) at the Andrews Academy Commencement on Sunday, May 29.

Atkins wins Alumni Award for Excellence in Education

For 30 years, Steven Atkins has taught in the Adventist educational system. His passion for science combined with encouragement of scholastic achievement prepared hundreds of students for college. During the Andrews Academy Commencement service on May 29, Atkins was presented the Alumni Award for Excel-

lence in Education in recognition of his service.

The Alumni Awards Foundation has promoted excellence in Adventist education since 1996. Every year, they acknowledge ten teachers in the North American Division who demonstrate an exemplary commitment to outstanding education.

Atkins' commitment is extraordinary. In addition to teaching earth science and biology, he is also licensed to teach chemistry and algebra. During his time at Andrews Academy, Atkins instituted the senior portfolio as a graduation requirement. College preparedness begins early in Atkins' classes. As a part of his earth science class, freshmen begin assembling their portfolios. In this subtle way, Atkins encourages each student to begin thinking about college, encouraging higher education. He also shares his lab notes with teachers across the country, and students throughout the years recall his spiritual applications drawn from the day's lesson. On top of all that, he sends out regular "AA Updates" to current students, alumni and parents.

Cleon White, then principal of

Andrews Academy, nominated Atkins for the award in early February. The Alumni Awards Foundation receives hundreds of nominations each year, which are then separated into tiers. Melissa Cechota, communications coordinator, noted Atkins' nomination and statement of purpose stood out to her. "He represents what makes Adventist education successful." Atkins' emphasis on college preparedness also stood out: "He elevates the sciences in [Andrews] Academy to serious levels of academic achievement."

"On a scale of one to ten where ten is the highest," said White, "I'd give him an 11." On behalf of the Alumni Awards Foundation, Andrews Academy Board chair, Brent Geraty, presented Atkins with a medallion and \$2,000 for his own use.

Upon presentation, he received a standing ovation. "It's a joy to work at the Academy, and to be able to tell people about God as my job is the greatest thing," says Atkins.

Samantha Snively, student news writer, Office of Integrated Marketing & Communication

BEST Organization hosts first research symposium

High school seniors in the BEST Early Research Program presented their research projects on Wednesday, Apr. 27, at the first BEST Organization Research Symposium. With complete confidence, the students described their projects in the field of organic chemistry—a subject not usually covered until the second or third year of college.

This first symposium was "a milestone on the path to universal adoption of early research participation," says Desmond Murray, assistant professor of chemistry and the founder and CEO of the Building Excellence in Science and Technology (BEST) Organization. These students attended the Berrien County Math &



Students from the Berrien County Math & Science Center demonstrate their research projects at the first BEST Organization Research Symposium.

Science Center at Andrews University for four years and participated in an independent research period their senior year.

In 1998, Desmond Murray began incorporating independent research periods into organic chemistry classes. In 2001,

two high school students joined him to perform research during the summer. Six years later, 12th graders were regularly involved in research and BEST officially became a nonprofit organization. To date, more than 650 students have been involved in early research projects through the BEST Organization.

Murray and the students participating in BEST Early Research garnered national recognition in the form of more than \$370,000 in grant monies from the National Science Foundation, American Chemical Society, the State of Michigan and other foundations. Earlier graduates from the BEST program who continued in scientific disciplines discovered the advantage of participating in early research.

Samantha Snively, student news writer, Office of Integrated Marketing & Communication