

Professional Corner

Finding a beginning advisor who has hit the ground running and is doing a great job is always a treat. Here's one such story.

The **Chapter Awards Program** (CAP) has been revised and improved for this year, with Gold Level Chapters eligible to attend a Chapter Management Academy at the ICDC.

Check it out in your planner/calendar at May 15 or at the end of your Chapter Management System CD or at www.deca.org/pdf/CAP.pdf.

Ralph Andersen, advisor at **Bonneville H.S.** in Utah, came to teaching late. For 25 or so years he looked for a fulfilling direction. Still searching, he spent a day substitute teaching and “fell in love with it.” As a result, he acquired a teaching credential partly based on industry experience. He has now been teaching for two and a half years.

Why did he decide to institute DECA in his classroom? His family had a history with VICA (now SkillsUSA, one of our sister CTSOs). Ralph himself was a VICA member and had attended their national conference. He was convinced that his marketing teaching had to have a co-curricular part. He quickly recognized the potential help of DECA's **Competitive Events Program**.

It seemed natural for Ralph to integrate his classroom with DECA's competitive events. He uses all of the “DECA Connections” in *Marketing Essentials* and uses other textbooks (three or four) as well. His students get practice with DECA events in his classroom.

His method for using the events is to divide the class into small groups of two's or three's and give each group an event. They work on the situation, and then one of the group presents the event. Afterwards, he says, “This is what we do in DECA, too.” He tells them that if they go to competition, they only have to do this in front of one adult (not the whole class). Ralph starts with the series events, and juniors and seniors move on to the written events.

Ralph's predecessor at Bonneville ran a small DECA chapter (15) and had about 10 students in his class. Ralph arrived a week before regional competition, and took about a dozen members to state competition. Several had written projects.

By the next year, he took around 40 to districts, 25 to state competition and 7 to ICDC. Marketing research is one of Utah's state objectives, so he integrates this into the classroom. Students write their assignments in the format of the event. When he praises them, they want to go to competition.

The Secret of His Success

Last year the Bonneville Chapter had 178 members, and the program now has a second teacher. How did this happen? Ralph bought into the **Chapter Awards Program**, even though Utah had not had a Gold Level Chapter

for 20 years. Says Ralph, “I don't know why other people don't do it. You're doing it already, and here is your ticket to ICDC.” (Remember that the states are in charge of the CAP program and decide how many Gold Level Chapters they can take to ICDC.)

Several of his students wrote the report, but a lot of chapter activities meet the requirements of the CAP. “If you just set your course, you can follow it through,” says Ralph. They became a 100 percent chapter, even though their district does not allow them to make membership mandatory. You may not want to go as far as Ralph did when he pledged to let the members shave his head if they got 100 percent members, but you get the idea. Make it interesting. (By the way, he happily submitted to the haircut when they reached their goal.)

Bonneville H.S. has a diverse school population, spanning the socio-economic groups and incorporating about 40 percent minority students (like DECA nationwide). He is convinced that DECA has much to offer all segments of the school population. He is happy to take into his classroom students who might be bidding their time for six weeks on their way to an alternative high school. The school administration knows that during this time, the marketing/DECA program will add needed career skills to that student's portfolio. Ralph realizes that many students who do not take the route to college and further education will find jobs as a direct result of his efforts. He mentions a student who wrote a good project in his class but did not take it to competition. Only later did he learn that this child of a single mother had to be at home caring for brothers and sisters. Still he knows that the classroom experience contributed to her future success in life.

Advice to other new teachers

Get involved with DECA outside your classroom. Ralph has joined several boards for marketing and DECA at the state level. “This gives me credibility. The kids are impressed. And it helps professionally.” He notes that involvement also pays off when the state association is putting together its contingent for the ICDC. He feels his efforts helped him get support for the chapter member who went to ICDC to display the group's Chapter Awards Program.

Thanks, Ralph, for sharing with us.