

Community LIVING

Good as gold



Dean DuCharme, Jupiter Elementary School fifth-grade teacher, and Sam Silverman, incoming senior at The Benjamin School, look over books-on-tape that Silverman donated to JES, Monday.

JEFF ALEXANDER The Jupiter Courier

Jupiter teen gives voice to books-on-tape project

The effort earns Benjamin student Sam Silverman a Gold Congressional Award

By Jeff Alexander
Senior Writer

ESOL students at Jupiter Elementary School can now hear the antics of "Curious George" as well as read about them.

Thanks to Jupiter resident Sam Silverman, 17, an incoming senior at The Benjamin School, a total of 50 books-on-tape are now available as a lending library for English for Speakers of Other Languages students to help them understand what they are reading.

"This way, they can see it as they hear it," Silverman said after setting up a display rack of books with accompanying tape cassettes in a classroom.

The project helped Silverman earn community service hours towards his Gold Congressional Award, which he received this week from U.S. Rep.

Mark Foley, R-Jupiter, in Washington, D.C.

Foley honored 11 area students — the most of any congressional district around the country — with gold medals on this past week as part of the Congressional Awards Ceremony, proudly exclaiming to the crowd of parents, friends and teachers, "see, we have more than hurricanes in Florida."

Foley handed out gold medals to Atul Kapila, Kyle Lambrecht, Kerry O'Neil, Tyler Stevenson, Alex Trimper, Christine Vartan and Silverman of Jupiter; Annie Smith of Tequesta; Robert Hogle and Kathryn Krauskopf of Stuart; and Ashley Wood of Port St. Lucie.

"It's so exciting for me to have the largest number of Congressional awards," Foley said at the event. Like a proud father, he looked at each student from his district and pointed, "That's mine, that's mine, mine again."

"It's fun to watch these kids succeed," he added. "These are the next

leaders of our country."

Congress established the congressional award program in 1979 to recognize initiative, achievement and public service in students ranging in age from 14-23 years old who achieve goals in voluntary public service, personal development, physical fitness and expedition activities.

This year's class consisted of 242 students — the largest in history.

The print books were donated by Wachovia bank, while Silverman, the son of Tom and Nina Silverman of Jupiter, recorded the books — designed for first-, second- and third-graders — with the help of students in Florida Atlantic University's College of Education's Language Arts class.

The project started about four years ago when his mother was on a field trip with a local elementary school. She discovered that many children — especially Hispanic students — were struggling to read be-

Gold Congressional Award Recipients

Jupiter:

- ▶ Atul Kapila
- ▶ Kyle Lambrecht
- ▶ Kerry O'Neil
- ▶ Sam Silverman
- ▶ Tyler Stevenson
- ▶ Alex Trimper
- ▶ Christine Vartan

Tequesta:

- ▶ Annie Smith

Stuart:

- ▶ Robert Hogle
- ▶ Kathryn Krauskopf

Port St. Lucie:

- ▶ Ashley Wood

GOLD

FROM A17

cause their parents couldn't speak English, Silverman said.

"This was alarming to my sister, Faren, and I, and after considering the situation further, we conceived of the idea of recording books on tape so that children could have someone to read to them (in English) and thereby improve literacy," he said.

The first school to receive books-on-tape — nearly 150 by June of 2004 — was Warfield Elementary School in Indiantown. He first got assistance from friends in recording the books and scoured libraries and used book sales for the volumes themselves, with his parents underwriting the cost of the tapes.

He later worked with Key Clubs at area high schools to record the books. Wachovia then agreed to donate the books and money to buy additional tape recorders and tapes, he said. Tapes run about 20 minutes in length, depending on the size of the book.

Dean DuCharme, a Jupiter Elementary School fifth grade teacher who will be working with ESOL students this summer, said that the books will be a boon for the students.

"I have children here who are going to cherish this," he said. "This is what many need to read on their (classmates') level."

Silverman will assist students this summer by volun-

teering as an assistant teacher in a five-week language enrichment program, where the books-on-tape will be part of the curriculum.

The project got a major boost last fall through the Community Foundation of the Palm Beaches. Silverman was awarded \$5,000 from the 12th annual Dwight Allison Fellows Awards.

The money is being used to buy tapes, labels, a display rack and bags to hold the books.

The books-on-tape also will be used at ESOL classes which he has volunteered to teach, two evenings each week, for adults at Corn-Maya in Jupiter, said Silverman; and the books-on-tape will be delivered to the Thelma B. Pittman Jupiter Preschool, among others.

— Amie Parnes contributed to this story

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