Mini-Med School Gets Additional Funding

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PRNewswire/ - ING, a leading provider of employer-sponsored retirement plans for educators, businesses, government and not-for-profit entities, recently awarded Rebecca Brewer, a biology teacher at Troy High School in Troy, Michigan, the top prize in the national 2011 ING Unsung Heroes awards program. As the first-place winner, Brewer will receive $25,000 to add to her initial $2,000 grant to help fund "Mini-Med School," the program she is implementing that takes her students beyond simply dissecting organs, to actually simulating surgeries.

"Rebecca Brewer finds ways to not only teach students but reach them to facilitate authentic learning," said Mark Dziatczak, principal, Troy High School. Brewer's project is designed to move 11th and 12th grade biology students from simply dissecting preserved specimens to also performing mock surgical procedures on the organs. As an example, after they go through classroom learning about the anatomy of the heart, the next day, students will dissect the preserved heart.

To take the learning to the next level, students are informed the next day that their patient had a heart attack and they will have to diagnose and treat the symptoms. Additionally, medical experts who have an existing relationship with the school because of the school's medical job-shadowing program, which Brewer has managed for the last seven years with the local hospital, will come in to talk to the students.

For example, a cardiac surgeon would visit the class on heart surgery day and a neurosurgeon on brain surgery day. Ultimately, Brewer will engage her more than 100 AP Biology students in authentic learning experiences. The students will be graduating with not just exposure to medical procedures, but actual practice performing skills done on a surgeon's operating table, including how to suture a wound, the basics of performing bypass surgery, craniotomies and many more procedures.

Because they will be gaining a much better sense of what it truly means to be a surgeon through practical applications, Brewer hopes the lessons inspire students to become the future doctors of tomorrow. Ideally, Brewer, who lives in Lake Orion, would like to expand the program beyond the walls of her own classroom and develop a guide for biology teachers nationwide.

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