

Human and Civil Rights Award Winner

Applegate-Dorros Peace and Understanding Award

Presented to an NEA member, NEA local affiliate, and/or NEA state affiliate whose activities in education contribute to international understanding and motivate youth to work for world peace.



John Robert "Rob" Fetters
Member, Ohio

When Rob Fetters was in elementary school, his parents began fostering and adopting teenage refugees from Vietnam. He grew up with ten Vietnamese brothers and two Vietnamese sisters. He learned to speak some Vietnamese and appreciate Vietnamese food. Clearly, the experience made him a confirmed internationalist.

Today, Rob Fetters teaches Social Studies, grades 9-12, in the Mount Vernon Public Schools, Mount Vernon, Ohio. For the past 20 years, Rob Fetter's family has included his wife, Khampraseuth, her parents, brothers, sisters, and many other relatives from Laos, where they suffered many hardships from years of war and refugee camps.

Rob Fetters and his family specialize in hosting students and teachers from across the world. For several weeks every year, from 2001 to 2006, they hosted teachers and college students from Japan. While in the U.S., these teachers interacted with and taught Mount Vernon students, along with students from surrounding high schools. From 2007 to 2009, Rob Fetters and his family hosted two college professors from China. They lived with the Fetters and Rob made sure that the students in his classroom had the opportunity to meet with the Chinese professors and learn from them. Rob has also brought international guests from Ohio State University and Kenyon College into his school and community to share their cultures and insights.

In addition to organizing the Mount Vernon International Festival every year, Rob Fetters also organizes the Mount Vernon K-12 Japanese art contest. Based on his experience, Rob earned a grant from Ohio State University's Institute for Japanese Studies; and for the past several years, he has organized a Japanese-influenced art and literature contest that has awarded thousands of dollars in student prizes.

A passionate teacher and advocate for intercultural understanding among young people, Rob Fetters models these principles in his school and in his relationship with local higher education institutions and his community. He has received many accolades from his colleagues and the parents of his students. A parent of one of his former students, Kim McMullan, John Crowe Ransom Professor of English, Kenyon College, says of Rob: He has "a deep, personal knowledge of a range of national cultures" and "the energy, farsightedness and dedication to bring this knowledge to bear on his teaching every day."

Xiujuan Wang, one of the Chinese guest professors Rob and his family hosted and now Guest Teacher Advisor, Confucius Institute, University of Delaware, says simply: "Mr. Rob Fetters is a creative teacher with an international mind."

What's more Rob Fetters has been an activist and leader in the Mount Vernon Education Association and the Ohio Education Association.

