

2017 NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Human and Civil Rights Award Winner

◆ Michael Joseph Franklin ◆

Applegate-Dorros Peace and International Understanding Award



Michael Joseph Franklin is an educator who has spent more than half of his life volunteering in Honduras on educators, empowering and improving the lives of thousands of women and girls.

“After almost two decades, I still remember what first struck me when I began volunteering in Honduras, everywhere you look you see women working for their families and doing it amidst violent sexism and environmental abuse. It still sticks with me because these are the factors we need to change to create sustainable development,” said Franklin.

Franklin is the domestic coordinator for the Alabama Honduras Medical Education Network (AHMEN). Through work with AHMEN, Franklin and his team have collaborated with Water With Blessings, which trains women in both the mindset of a clean water culture and also how to use and maintain their own household water filter. In the six years that Franklin has been promoting water filtration, he estimates that they have ensured around 4,000 individuals have access to clean water. He also coordinated the opening of a jewelry school in Le Ceiba City where he worked with other volunteer instructors to provide lessons in jewelry construction, basic finance and sustainable business practices. He works closely with a dormitory for at-risk young women in La Ceiba City, Honduras called Shalom. The women there are in danger of being physically and sexually abused, kidnapped, and abandoned in their hometowns. Franklin helps recruit sponsors to support these women in their educational pursuits.

Franklin is a Spanish language teacher at Franklin County High School (FCHS) in Winchester, Tennessee where he models egalitarian leadership. He has been an extremely active supporter of the FCHS Gay Straight Alliance, serves as an ally to a women’s empowerment group at the University of the South and is a faculty sponsor of the women’s studies club at FCHS.

Franklin is a member of the Tennessee Education Association’s (TEA) “Status of Women Committee” and was a keynote speaker at the November 2015 conference in Nashville. He was recently awarded TEA’s Susan B. Anthony award for leadership in women’s issues. In his acceptance speech Franklin noted that teaching is a female-dominated profession and that education cannot be a profession where women are choosing between living with their parents or going broke, staying single or getting married in order to achieve financial stability.