Reuben D'Silva
MILITARY HERO GIVES BACK TO THE CLASSROOM

Reuben D’Silva served his country as a U.S. Marine on active duty in Iraq. Today, he serves his community teaching World History at Rancho High School in Las Vegas—the same high school he graduated from 10 years ago. “I have always believed in public service and I wanted to have a career in it,” he says. Being the son of immigrants, I was always told that it was a duty to give back to the country and community that gave us everything we had.”

D’Silva was inspired by his mother, Cruzinha, who for more than two decades taught at nearby Tom Williams Elementary School. “My mom showed me that the most important and direct way to help create and shape the future of our world is through teaching,” he says.

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In 2007, D’Silva was shot through the arm in Fallujah. He went on to complete an undergraduate teaching degree, plus two master’s degrees in globalization studies and comparative religion and policies. “I had firmly decided that I wanted to be a teacher, and nothing was going to stop me from doing it!” he exclaims.

Last year, D’Silva entered the classroom. He also became a member of the Clark County Education Association, which is one of the fastest growing unions in the nation and an affiliate of the Nevada State Education Association. “I joined the NEA because I am a strong advocate of teachers having a collective voice,” he says. D’Silva says his membership has been especially valuable to him as a new teacher. “The NEA and its local affiliates have given me tons of opportunities to interact with fellow educators throughout Nevada and [get] professional development and career training.” That includes NEA-sponsored trainings on effective classroom management—a challenge for any new teacher, even one with a Naval Achievement Medal and a record of remaining cool under fire. This year, D’Silva said he looks forward to becoming an active union member and working with his school’s principal to create a stronger PTA. When asked why he cares so much about teaching, D’Silva replies, “The best part of teaching is knowing, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that I am serving my fellow human beings.”

—RICHARD NAITHRAM

Well I’ll be a Monkey’s Uncle!

Pens, pencils, and paper are often found in school backpacks and desks. And old portraits of great-grandparents and souvenirs make frequent appearances during show and tell days. But when NEA Today asked visitors to our Facebook page about the strangest thing a student brought to school, the answers were...well, see for yourself!

Theresa Kilday
My teaching partner had a pret
student bring his mom’s diamond engagement ring to school and gave it to his “girlfriend.” Mom had taken it off because she was pregnant and it didn’t fit. Thankfully the little girl’s mom brought it back to school the next day!

Rachel Smith
Sparks A chicken on a leash for show and tell. The student demonstrated how she could walk it on the leash in her yard [and] on my green rug in front of the board.

Shirley Mina Yamauchi
My student asked me to microwave an entire Tombstone pizza once. He pulled the whole pizza out of his backpack.

Camille Louie
My kinder student told me she had brought a stuffed animal for show and tell. It was too large for the paper bag she brought it in and asked could I help her. I walked over and leaned down to help pull it free. That’s when my hair stood on end. This five year old didn’t seem fazed that her show and tell was a real stuffed armadillo! I had to put on my brave-teacher face and not scream! It’s funny now that I think of it.

Lynda Levitt Foote
I had a kiddo bring a frozen deer leg for show and tell once. Did some awesome stuff with it. Made tracks in the sand box and a plaster cast of it for the science table. Compared the fur and hoof with magnifying glasses. Then when it thawed a bit (accidently) we studied the joints. Teachable moments.

Virginia Johns
One of my ninth graders brought her gigantic pet rat to my English class, perched on her shoulder with its tail tangled up in her long hair. She asked if it was OK to let it stay since she needed it for science class next period. I cringed inwardly but finally agreed, and the rat listened and sat quietly on her shoulder while we read and discussed our class novel.

Amy Faircloth
A ten-point rack of antlers...I called the parent to explain that they weren’t appropriate for bringing to school because they were so sharp. To save her child from getting into trouble I stashed them until a parent could come “visit” and take them home.

Susan Winn
Fish in a thermos!

Debbie Montgomery
A snake in a lunch box.

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