



# March 27, 2000 Wyandotte Distinguished Graduate Inductee



John A. Zavalney  
Class of 1972

John Zavalney's Science class is a "literal zoo." This RHS alumnus, Class of 1972, has distinguished himself as an educator by providing a unique experimental classroom for his middle school students at the Foshay Learning Center in inner city Los Angeles. The wild life that inhabits his classroom had been confiscated while being smuggled over the border from Mexico. Classroom students assume responsibility for maintaining the animals and are motivated by hands-on learning to more extensive research.

Zavalney's innovative classroom endeavors have earned him recognition by the Walt Disney Company as one of the top three science teachers in the country as an American Teachers Awards Honoree (1998). He is also a California State Finalist for the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science (1999).

Zavalney's interest in science, the environment and education extends well beyond his classroom. His life is centered on learning, teaching and sharing his experiences. In 1997, he was given the opportunity by Dr. Jane Goodall to work in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania promoting and further establishing Goodall's environmental program "Roots and Shoot" with the local children, schools and community. During his three months there, he helped negotiate and rewrite the final bi-lateral agreement between the Tanzanian Minister of Education and the U.S. Government making Tanzania a GLOBE country, receiving a personal letter of thanks from Vice-President Gore. As a GLOBE trainer, John traveled to the WORLD EXPO in Lisbon, Portugal in 1998 with another teacher and three students. There they worked with schools from Portugal, Puerto Rico and the U.S. to demonstrate GLOBE protocols to visitors to the U.S. Pavilion.

As a result of his work as a classroom teacher and life-long learner, John was asked by the Walt Disney Company to do a Public Service Announcement on positive educational activities in schools. Disney filmed John and his students in his classroom for the PSA, which began airing on CBS, the Disney, Learning and Discovery Channels in November, 1999.

At Roosevelt High School, John was a National Honor Society Member, a varsity letterman in football, swimming, and baseball. He earned his BA in Secondary

Education, majoring in Biology and General Science, from West Liberty State College in West Virginia and is a Masters candidate in Computer Based Education at California State University in Dominguez Hills. He and his wife Darlene live in San Pedro, California where they volunteer on a Veterinary Disaster Team and the L.A. Roots & Shoots Steering Committee.