



SMART Scholarship Winner Todd Mitchell

Todd Mitchell, an Information Technology student at University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee's North Port location, was recently awarded a Science, Mathematics and Research for Transformation (SMART) scholarship from the United States Department of Defense.

Mitchell will receive full tuition and fees, an annual stipend of \$25,000, a paid summer internship and best of all, a guaranteed job after graduation. He has accepted a civilian position with the Quantico, Virginia Marine Corps Systems Command to start in 2012.

Mitchell returned to college after having served in the Navy 20 years and then working in retail management. He chose USF S-M for its convenient North Port location. "My family was already established in North Port, so I needed a convenient degree program option, and USF Sarasota-Manatee was exactly what I was looking for," he said. "I liked that the IT program was actually teaching job skills that would make you employable, as opposed to business theory that doesn't always apply in the real world. The class work I've done here is real world stuff that I'm going to use in my career."

He added, "Most of my classes at USF S-M were focused on security and writing software that isn't vulnerable to hackers and malicious software. The Marine Corps was really impressed with all that I already know about the military and internet security."

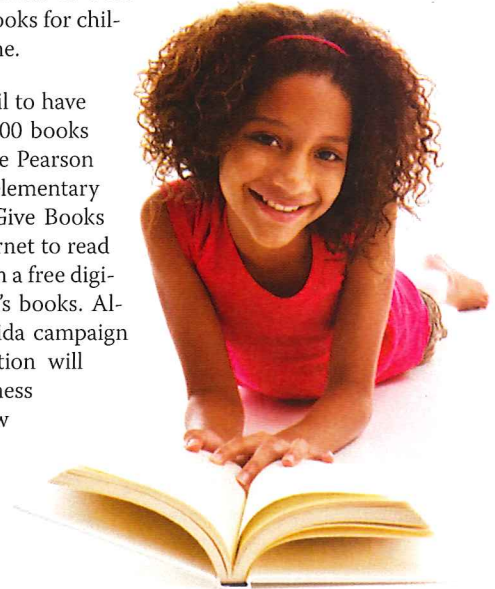
Mitchell added that his university experience and former military experience helped him get the position, which was offered to only 300 of the 3,000 applicants who applied for the scholarship through the Office of National Scholarships.

Cranberry Kids Read Most Books

Who says that kids don't like to read? Try telling that to the students at Cranberry Elementary School. The school was one of two Sarasota County schools (Englewood Elementary School was the other school) that topped the list of more than 300 Florida schools reading more than 50,000 books in less than two weeks in the "Read for My School Florida" campaign. Cranberry Elementary earned 8,674 books for their efforts. Cranberry Elementary School principal Linda Daniels was honored by the Sarasota County School Board and school district administrators on May 3 at the school board chambers.

The Read for My School Florida campaign was offered by We Give Books, a free digital initiative from the Penguin Group and the Pearson Foundation. This initiative allows teachers, students and families to work together to give increased access to books for children who need them, by reading online.

The challenge was announced in April to have Florida elementary schools read 50,000 books by May 9 and for each book read, the Pearson Foundation donated one book to the elementary schools chosen by the readers. We Give Books allows anyone with access to the Internet to read a book online as often as they like from a free digital library of more than 150 children's books. Although the Read for My School Florida campaign is now closed, the Pearson Foundation will match, dollar for dollar, any local business donation toward the purchase of new books as a part of the Read for My School campaign. For more information on the matching program, visit www.WeGiveBooks.org



Sarasota County School Board Employee of the Year

Trish Jones, a media center aide at Lamarque Elementary School, was named 2011 School-Related Employee of the Year by the Sarasota County School District at their May 5 awards luncheon. She was selected from 49 nominees.

Lamarque Elementary School Principal Sally Mancheno said, "Her creativity and artistic expression stirs our students' imaginations and brings literacy to life. She is constantly decorating themes in the media center and changing the checkout desk to a castle, a ship, a sleigh or cart, either matching a holiday or book she is reading. She continually seeks new ways to excite students and goes above and beyond expectations."

Accepting the honor, Jones said, "I couldn't have done it without the incredible support of everyone at Lamarque. Ms. Mancheno allows me to do what my parents would never let me do - paint on the walls. I'd like to thank my husband for letting me use the garage for my school projects. What else can I say? I love my job. As Ms. Mancheno says, 'always for the children.'"



At the luncheon Jones received the keys to a new Toyota Scion TC to drive for the next 12 months, courtesy of Germain Toyota of Sarasota, the lead sponsor of the School-Related Employee of the Year program for the fifth consecutive year. Jones will also serve as an ambassador for the school district for the next year and represent the district at the state level of competition.