

September 14, 2006

Web site lets donors help out teachers

Donors Choose lists needs in classroom, accepts contributions and purchases items

By **Andy Gammill**

andy.gammill@indystar.com

September 14, 2006

State officials and area business leaders kicked off a campaign Wednesday to encourage Indiana teachers to use a new Web site matching potential donors to teachers who need help.

DonorsChoose.org, a New York-based Web site, handles all the money and shipping of items.

The site asks teachers to write a thank-you note to donors and sends a camera to the classroom to document the money at work. Those photos are then forwarded to the donors.

The entire amount of the donation goes to the class project, although about 90 percent of donors choose to increase their payment 15 percent to cover the Web site's overhead costs.

Some Hoosier teachers are already using the site.

Travis Campbell wanted a way to explore the community with his special education students -- all of whom have severe disabilities. The projector he figured would help cost \$1,200.

The Tech High School teacher couldn't afford that, so he turned to DonorsChoose.org.

So far, donors have put up \$588 toward Campbell's projector. He's optimistic the rest will come in.

"It is absolutely phenomenal," he said.

Gov. Mitch Daniels visited a classroom at Indianapolis Public School 51 on Wednesday and used the site to make a donation on behalf of himself and his wife for a math project.

"I fell in love with Donors Choose in the first 10 seconds I heard the concept," he said. "It allows Hoosiers to open their hearts and act directly."