

Middleton senior receives scholarship

By Kathy Steele | Tribune Staff

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TAMPA - Abraham Tejada wants more than anything to teach music to children. The 18-year-old already has made a start as a volunteer, giving lessons on the French horn to Sligh Middle School students.

"I want to teach high school band and orchestra. It's kind of my dream," said Tejada, who is a senior at Middleton Magnet High School and a former Sligh student.

Recently he got a boost toward making his dream come true.

Candy Olson, chairwoman of the Hillsborough County School Board, made a surprise visit to the school, halting band practice to award Tejada the \$10,000 Candy Olson Ambassador for Public Education Scholarship. She was joined by Middleton Principal Owen Young and school board member Doretha Edgecomb.

For each of four years, Tejada will receive \$2,500 for college expenses.

Olson in October had received the Richard R. Green Award, the highest honor given by the Council of Great City Schools. She was given scholarship money to award to a high school senior of her choice in Hillsborough County or her alma mater.

Tejada was one of 44 students countywide who wrote an essay on how education had helped him reach his goal.

It was a difficult choice, said Olson. She had help from a handful of school officials and also sought advice from her daughter, Katherine.

Tejada's essay stood out in part because of his volunteer work at Sligh. He showed he was serious about wanting to teach music and was doing something about it. "That was a big part of it," Olson said.

In his essay, Tejada said he was inspired to become a public schoolteacher by the teachers who had mentored him. "They have inspired me to make a difference ... and that is why I feel that one day I will see a public school marching band from the other side of the baton," he wrote.

Tejada is drum major at Middleton. He plays five instruments including viola, French horn and baritone. He is a member of a jazz band and teaches beginning musicians at the Revealing Truth Ministries. At his June graduation, he will be salutatorian and has a 4.5 grade point average.

Tejeda plans to earn a music education degree from Miles College in Alabama, and then a doctorate from the Berklee College of Music in Boston.

"I was worried," Tejeda said. But with the scholarship, he said, "I'm kind of set now for college."