

# Travel adds value for math teacher

Johanson recalls his past while planning future

By JENNY SCHMEICHEL  
Staff Reporter

Since seventh grade, Thor Johansen knew he wanted to be in the Peace Corps.

Johansen has been a part-time teacher here at Highline for the past 16 years.

He always has a joke up his sleeve, smile on his face, and genuinely takes an interest in his students' accomplishments.

His interest in the Peace Corps began when a representative from the Peace Corps came and spoke to his seventh grade class.

She had recently been on a trip to Haiti where she learned French and helped educate the people in various subjects. After that, he was hooked.

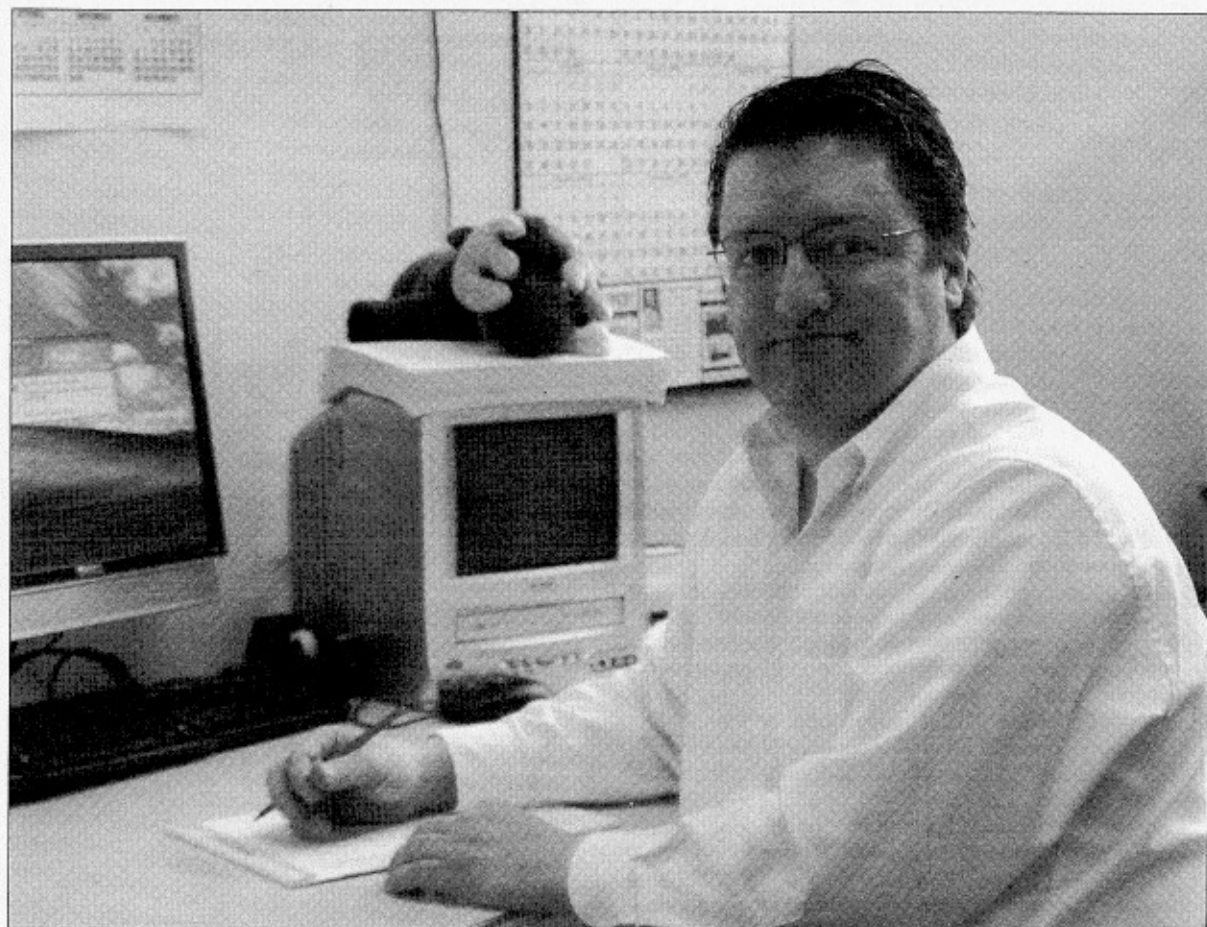
"This was the first major turning point in my life," Johansen said. "The second was when I had malaria."

Eventually Johansen did work for the Peace Corps and they sent him to many different places. At the age of 30 he was living in West Africa in a village of about 6-7,000 people doing work for the Peace Corps.

He got sick with malaria with a temperature of around 105 degrees. He didn't even realize he was sick until he stood up and fell right back down.

Johansen tried to contact the U.S. Embassy in West Africa but no one was answering.

His advice for living in Africa is: "Don't get sick on a Friday afternoon, because no one



Ami Nguyen/THUNDERWORD

*Thor Johanson enjoys both teach and travel and tries to find time to do both.*

is at the embassy."

Luckily, there were German doctors at the other end of the village who were willing to take him in. For the next three days he was in and out of consciousness.

"I sang James Taylor lyrics to get me through the hard times," he said. "James Taylor can make anyone happy." He has a goal to visit all seven

continents. So far he has been to Africa, Europe, Asia, North America and Australia.

"The only two left are South America and Antarctica," he said.

"Antarctica would have to be a very short trip though," he said with a laugh. Thor Johansen has known he was meant to teach for a long time.

"The only hard part was

what subject to teach, because you have to be passionate about what you're teaching," he said.

Since 1988 he's been teaching math, science, P.E. and was even a librarian. In the classroom it is very obvious he has a passion for teaching, helping each student to understand the material and gain interest, his students say.

Currently he is teaching three

math classes at Highline and one at Green River Community College.

However, he is getting an itch to get back out and travel.

He is considering Paraguay, South America because he likes the Spanish language and is interested in learning it more.

"The best way to learn a language is to stick yourself in the middle of it," he said.