

Berman wins diversity award for school, world outreach

Last year's textbooks heaped into towering piles headed for the trash — an image that bothered Jay Berman. It seemed like such a waste, he says, so he set about finding a home for all that discarded information in a place where books are often in short supply.

"I wondered what I could do about that, and I decided to send them over to South Africa," Berman says. The Greenville High senior made it his senior project to gather, organize and catalog more than 1,000 books and ship them to an underserved school in Umlazi, South Africa.

Berman, whose parents are both natives of that country, had been there several times to visit and had witnessed firsthand the poverty in which many children lived. He recounts the story of his family's stopping to offer a young girl a ride home from school, typically a walk of several miles.

"Children that will go that far

STUDENT OF THE WEEK

- **Name:** Richard "Jay" Berman
- **School:** Greenville High
- **Age:** 18
- **Hometown:** Greenville
- **Family:** Parents Mark and Leigh, brother Matthew
- **Church:** Temple of Israel
- **Activities:** Lacrosse, SIC, Beta Club, NHS, peer tutoring

for an education deserve to be helped," he says.

For this project and others, Berman was recently named the high school winner of the Upstate Diversity Leadership Award, presented by the Richard W. Riley Institute at Furman University in recognition of his achievements in promoting diversity.

GHS English teacher Gene Hinson, who nominated Berman for the award, says, "Every day he is fighting for the underdog, trying to help those people that

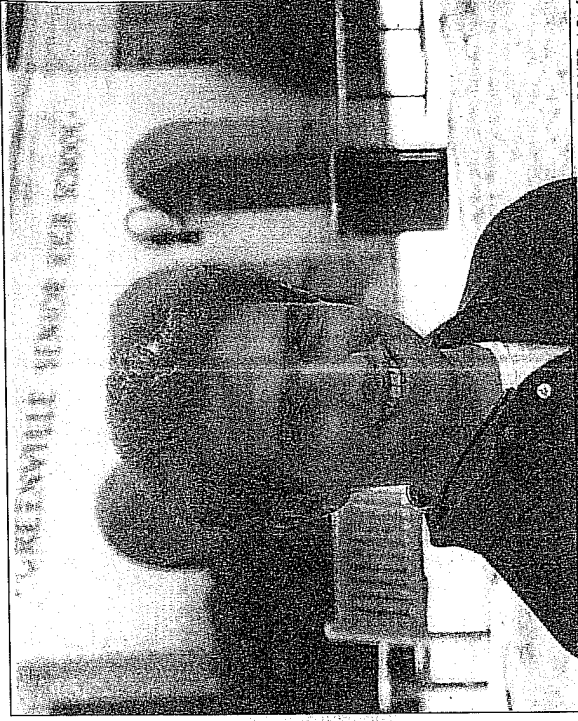
are less fortunate than himself and trying to make a positive difference in school.

"Jay helped carry those things that he had learned in his classes all the way to world level in helping other people in his Books for Africa project," says Hinson. "I think he is working at all those levels to make us realize we have more similarities than we do differences."

After participating in an Outward Bound "Unity and Diversity" program, Berman helped to coordinate Mix It Up Day at GHS, an event to encourage students to talk with others with whom they may not typically socialize. He also worked with a group to demonstrate teacher-student discrimination in a skit and then led classroom discussions on the topic.

This summer, Berman will visit China as part of a travel study program with Furman University.

"I think it's another opportuni-



GEORGE GARDNER / Staff

As his senior project, Jay Berman gathered, organized and cataloged more than 1,000 books and shipped them to an underserved school in Umlazi, South Africa.

ty for me to learn about other cultures and promote diversity," he says.

A Jewish child of immigrant parents, Berman says that his own experiences have helped him appreciate the value of diversity in the community at large.

"I guess you could say I'm a diverse person. Diversity's always been close to my heart," he says.

"It's been good for me so I can appreciate things from many different view points. It's helped me step in other proverbial shoes."

— Amy Clarke