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Park teachers recognized for excellence

By Dr. Debra Bowers, Superintendent

When Glen Sorenson from Proctor was named the 2005 Minnesota Teacher of the Year, he said, "Now, I just need about 70,000 more of these, for all the teachers in the state."

I can't stop thinking about his words because they are so true, especially here in St. Louis Park. Every one of our 340 teachers deserves praise and recognition for a job well done.

Earlier this month we celebrated national Teacher Appreciation Week. While we do appreciate all the students, families, support staff and volunteers who make our schools succeed, I'd like to focus for a moment on our teachers and thank them for the lasting contributions they make to our students' lives.

Peter Hobart teacher **Diane Achter** received the University of Minnesota Alumni Society's William E. Gardner Outstanding Educator Award this April. The plaque Diane was presented with sums up her worthiness succinctly. It reads: "The College ... presents the ...Award to Diane Achter, who, as a dedicated teacher for over thirty years, has shaped the lives of young children, co-created a multi-age classroom program, served as mentor to student teachers, been a collaborative leader in curriculum design in literacy and math, and selflessly shared her expertise with her colleagues."

Elaine May and Leslie O'Meara were honored by the Friends of St. Kate's for their contributions to women in education through the academic/business partnership our high school has with College of St. Catherine, a women's college in St. Paul.

"Leaders from the college have been active on our Business and Technology Advisory Committee," said Elaine, "and we wanted to find a way to bring more females into the fields of business and technology."

Cedar Manor fourth grade teacher **Marriah Davis** and Susan Lindgren sixth grade teacher **Meredith Homans** were both candidates for the Minnesota Teacher of the Year award. It is the oldest and most prestigious recognition program in Minnesota to honor excellence in education. It's really exciting and unusual to have more than one candidate from a district.

"Meredith is the most outstanding teacher I have worked with," said Susan Lindgren principal Ann Sullivan. "She impacts students with her commitment, dedication, heart and soul."

"Marriah really brings a sense of community and caring to her classroom," said Cedar Manor principal Bernice Amberg. "Her enthusiasm makes learning come alive."

Park Spanish Immersion (PSI) music teacher **Nyssa Brown** was honored with a \$25,000 Milken National Educator Award. The foundation's goal is to attract, develop, motivate and retain talented people to the challenge and adventure of teaching.

“Nyssa was nominated based on her depth of content knowledge, commitment to solid and sequential music instruction, and for her strong engagement in her students' learning experience. She is committed to excellence in the classroom,” said PSI principal Ursina Swanson.

We are proud of all our wonderful teachers. Most of the time, I hear about their awesome accomplishments in informal ways such as phone calls, emails and personal stories. And sometimes I hear about their accomplishments in formal ways as they receive awards. I've highlighted just a few of those stories today. Like Mr. Sorenson, I wish I had 340 awards to present. Each of our teachers deserves one.