

Middle school

This winning teacher really likes to teach these kids

Editor's Note: This is the second of three stories about teachers who have been honored as Farmington Public Schools' teachers of the year.

By TIM SMITH
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When Mary Ellen Thompson tells friends she would want to teach nowhere but middle school, it results in plenty of raised eyebrows.

"A lot of people tell me they wouldn't teach middle school, but I wouldn't want to teach any other group," said Thompson, a veteran eighth-grade language arts teacher at East Middle School. "They're fun, active, quizzy and challenging, constantly. They're always asking questions, wanting to know."

One thing they already know is that Thompson recently was selected Farmington Public Schools' Middle School Teacher of the Year. She received her award at the Tuesday, March 28, school board meeting.

They also know that Thompson has a full plate. Now in her 12th year in the district, she is

TEACHER OF THE YEAR

eighth-grade team leader (four teachers of different subjects are assigned to the same group of students); Language Arts Department chair, and coordinator of school programs for peer mediation, drug awareness and student assistance.

Asked about the award, Thompson said she was surprised but honored to receive it. "I feel like the recognition is really important," she said, "because I was nominated by my principal. But the support statements came from so many other people, parents, students, other teachers."

Thompson's approachability and patience seemed to be a common thread running through those statements.

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*Eugene Seaborn
—East Middle School principal*

wrote East Principal Eugene Seaborn, who nominated Thompson.

One of her colleagues describes her as "dedicated, hard-working, innovative, fair, thoughtful, caring, honest and loyal."

According to Thompson, her teaching style has evolved over the years, from the old-fashioned teacher-directed classroom to one that melds multiple tasks into a hands-on learning.

For example, a recent unit combined African-American his-



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BOONER

Honest: Mary Ellen Thompson really does like to teach middle-school students.

tory with the Civil War.

"Students were reading several different novels that were relating to those time periods," Thompson explained. But they also participated in various writing projects and oral reports.

Mini-lessons, as she called them, also keep students fresh on a variety of topics.

"Instead of spending a week on

punctuation ... I'll focus on a certain area" such as grammar or sentence structure, Thompson said.

And there is no single methodology Thompson favors to get her material across. "I do use overheads, and we do quizzes. But, there are lots of activities."

The district teachers of the year were entered in the

Newsweek-WDIV Outstanding Teacher Awards program coordinated in part by Oakland Schools. Besides Thompson, honored Farmington teachers include William Grace Elementary's Vitas Underya and Harrison High School's Susan Schultz, who won the district's elementary and high school awards, respectively.

INKWELL



Practice: Wood Creek students get ready for their upcoming science fair April 12 and 13. Above, Raymond Pastor (with jar) works with Ryan Pastor and Alysa Reid (left) and Ben and Max Sokoloff.

SCIENCE FAIR

On Monday, March 13, Wood Creek's PTA held a hands-on, how-to workshop in preparation for their upcoming science fair April 12 and 13.

Brenda Karana and Anna Pastor organized the event and were

inspired by their own kids' love of science and by recent research in the January edition of "Popular Science Magazine." The research reported that contrary to conventional wisdom, kids are actually born handymen to learn science and math. Susan Ayers and Fred Birach worked, with the students and their parents on simple experiments that everyone enjoyed.

Wood Creek Principal Berna Ravitz said, "It's the best organized science fair I've ever seen and I am confident this will be a fun and enriching experience for all."

HEADMASTER'S LIST

Cadet Mark Cohen, a 12th grader at Howe Military School in Indiana, was named to the headmaster's list for the fourth grading period of the school year. He is the son of Allan Cohen of Farmington Hills.

READING MONTH

March was "Reading Month" across the nation. Lanigan Elementary School selected "Read-

ing Around the World" as their theme and each classroom studied a particular country. They had one morning to give a presentation on the public announcement system about their country. They were also given a goal number of books to read each week. If the goal was met, then the student would color in a flag for their country and display it in the hall. Each flag would also represent a number of miles. The whole school had passports that were stamped each week as they took an imaginary trip around the world. Lanigan students have read enough books to travel more than two times around the world.

U.S. ACHIEVEMENT

The United States Achievement Academy announced that Nicole Salem of Northville has been named a United States National Award winner in cheerleading.

Salem, who attends Mercy High School, was nominated for

the national award by Madeline Wallace, a coach at the school. Salem will appear in the United States Achievement Academy Official Yearbook, which is published nationally.

GEOGRAPHIC BEE

Joel Knight, a sixth grader at Power Middle School, is a state qualifier for the Geographic Bee sponsored by National Geographic. He is the first sixth-grader from Power to make it to the finals.

Other finalists from Farmington are Jaclyn Sanders, a sixth-grader from East Middle School and Daniel Warsh, an eighth-grader from Hill Day School.

State competition will be held Friday, April 7, at Central Michigan University in Mt. Pleasant.

Victors from the state bees will gather at the National Geographic Society's worldwide headquarters in Washington on May 23 and 24 for the national championships.

MILLENNIUM AWARD

Bellah Shah, 11, of Farmington Hills, is one of 2,000 young people from around the world to be named a Millennium Dreamer for her outstanding contribution to the community.

To celebrate the new millennium, McDonald's and Disney searched the world to identify young people worldwide - like Bella - who are making a differ-

ence in their communities.

Bella received the Millennium Dreamers award for her work in assisting younger students, cleaning the school and planting flowers. She is being saluted as a positive role model, not only to her community but to young people around the world.

She was nominated for the program by Lasecia Jones, principal of Wooddale Elementary School.

If you have news about students, schools or teachers, let us know at the Inkwell, Farmington Observer, 33111 Grand River, Farmington, MI 48336, or by email: jmaliszewski@homecomm.net or tsmith@homecomm.net

Join the Easter Bunny in a Jaycees egg hunt April 15

The Farmington Area Jaycees, in conjunction with the Farmington Area Junior Jaycees and local businesses, will host the 45th annual Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, April 15 at Heritage Park on Farmington Road, north of Shawwassee.

The hunt will begin at 10 a.m. and is open to all families in Farmington/Farmington Hills as well as surrounding communities. The scheduled rain date for the event is Saturday, April 22 - same time and place.

In addition to the egg hunt,

To round off the day's excitement, the Jaycees will sponsor a 50/50 raffle to raise funds for the renovation of the Warner Mansion Carriage House.

The day's festivities will include door prize raffles, drawing contest for children of all ages and a special visit from the big hopper

himself - the Easter Bunny. Pictures with the Easter Bunny will also be available free of charge. To round off the day's excitement, the Jaycees will sponsor a 50/50 raffle to raise funds for the renovation of the Warner Mansion Carriage House.

Area businesses still interested in getting in on the day's excitement, may contribute candy and door prizes for the event. Contact Jodi Butzow, chairwoman for the Egg Hunt at (248) 477-JCCS.

CARRIER OF THE MONTH: FARMINGTON

Allison Hatlon has been named the Farmington Observer's Carrier of the Month for March. She is an eighth-grader at East Middle School and the daughter of Steve and Cindy Hatlon. She has a sister, Lauren, and enjoys shopping, going to the movies and talking on the phone.

Allison will attend Harrison High School in the fall and lists her favorite subjects as English, choir, band, theater and gym. She likes the money she makes from her route and also likes getting the chance to know her neighbors. Allison has learned much about responsibility from doing her route and feels that other young people would benefit too and learn the value of a dollar.

If you want to be a Farmington Observer carrier, please call 610-601-4718



Allison Hatlon

Boosters to host dinner

The North Farmington High School Girls and Boys Soccer Boosters will sponsor a lasagna (meat or veggie) dinner before the "Grease" performance from 5:30-7 p.m. Saturday, April 8, in the school cafeteria. Tickets are \$8 and may be purchased during school lunch hours or by calling Nancy at 661-0716. Dinner includes lasagna, salad, bread, drink and dessert.

Make a visit

William Tyndale College will host a free Visit Day from 10 a.m. to noon Saturday, April 15, for prospective students and their families. The college is on 12 Mills Road, west of Drake Road in Farmington Hills.



THE COMMUNITY HOUSE

4th Annual

Beer & Wine Tasting Party

at
The Community House
380 S. Bates
Birmingham

Friday, April 7th
7:30 pm - 11:00 p.m.

Hot & Cold Hors d'oeuvres
(Wine/Beer & Hors d'oeuvres Included in the ticket price)

With Prepaid Reservations
\$30 person
\$50 couple
at the Door \$40 per person

Featuring Pianist Sabrina Asher

For Reservations or More Information call
The Community House
(248) 644-5832
email: info@communityhouse.com



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