

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

ASD MEMORANDUM #29 (2001-2002)

September 24, 2001

TO: SCHOOL BOARD

FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

SUBJECT: DENALI AWARD RECIPIENTS, SPRING 2001

PERTINENT FACTS:

Twice each year, a committee of Anchorage School District employees selects six co-workers and one team of colleagues who demonstrate an outstanding commitment to our mission of educating students for success in life. These committed employees are given Denali Awards.

The certificated Denali award winners for Spring 2001 are Leslie McNelly of Baxter Elementary, Linda Smith of Dimond High School and Kim Ramharter of Kasuun Elementary. Ms. Ramharter was recognized at an earlier board meeting.

Leslie McNelly, a fourth-grade teacher at Baxter Elementary, has worked for the Anchorage School District since 1995. Ms. McNelly was nominated by a co-worker who said, "she makes history come alive for her students through books and hands-on activities." Ms. McNelly's fourth-graders learn about Greek mythology by dressing up as their favorite characters, cooking Greek food and hosting the Baxter Olympics. Ms. McNelly is also Baxter's Battle of the Books coordinator.

Linda Smith, a math teacher and department chair at Dimond High School, recently retired after 20 years in the district. Principal Guy Okada says Ms. Smith is "the math teacher I wish I had as a student but never did." In Ms. Smith's class, math is made relevant, challenging and fun. She teaches a range of classes from advanced placement calculus to lower level math classes. According to Okada, "Mrs. Smith keeps her feet firmly planted by being the math mother to the wide spectrum of students we have at Dimond as well as to her department." During Ms. Smith's career she has piloted new courses for the district, developed curriculum as a Christa McAullife Fellow, and played an integral role in developing the Dimond High School community.

The support staff award winners are Yong “Sam” Yim of Klatt Elementary and Pat Syta of Kasuun Elementary. Ms. Syta was recognized at an earlier board meeting.

Yong “Sam” Yim, the lead custodian at Klatt Elementary, is so meticulous that visitors to the 19-year-old building often think Klatt is a new school. Yim has been with the district since 1978 and has earned the respect of the teachers and support staff at Klatt. The school’s administrative assistant said, “His cheerful demeanor is exceeded only by his high work ethic. Mr. Yim takes tremendous pride in keeping Klatt in ‘like new’ condition.”

Student Nutrition supervisor Betsy Nickels is the administrative recipient of the Denali Award. This spring, Ms. Nickels retired after 25 years in the district. She was nominated by her supervisor and her co-workers and received letters of recommendation from local companies. Co-workers claim the key to Ms. Nickels’ success is that she views every assignment as an opportunity. With this attitude, Ms. Nickels introduced brand-name foods and food courts to local high schools and increased awareness of safe food handling practices across the district.

Teachers Tom Bronga, Lou Chandler and Bill Ennis make up the East High School Technology Team., the recipients of the Denali team award. The team successfully developed the first “on-line” class in the district and implemented the First Class system which helps teachers and students increase productivity. Mr. Bronga, Mr. Chandler and Mr. Ennis have recently made live video streaming a reality at East High. Co-workers compliment their competence as well as their good-humored natures saying, “They are exceptionally responsive to frantic calls for help,” and “Thank you so much for the many times you’ve helped me (sometimes for the same thing more than once) without making me feel incompetent.”

It is recommended that the school board recognize these Denali Award recipients, and all of the nominees, for the example of excellence that they set for the entire Anchorage School District community.

Attachment

CC/LW/ME

Prepared by: Michelle Egan, Public Relations Director
Approved by: Lawrence A. Wiget, Director, Public Affairs

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
SPRING 2001 DENALI AWARD NOMINEES

Nominees:

Kelly Kirk, Chugiak High School teacher
Donna McCarrey, Dimond High School teacher
Linda Outcalt, Mt. Iliamna teacher
Lee Tomco, Dimond High School teacher
Debbie Wakefield, Bayshore Elementary teacher
James Kurth and John Longley, Maintenance Department
Gloria Ulmer, Mt. Spur Elementary administrative assistant
Barbara Garrison, Benny Benson Secondary School principal
Denise Greene-Wilkinson, Polaris K-12 School principal
Clark Middle School Green Team
Districtwide Special Education Pre-School teaching assistants
East High School Counseling Team
Kasuun Elementary Special Education Team
Lake Otis Elementary Staff
Mt. View Elementary Staff

Denali Award selection committee:

Tracy Bulot, Tudor Elementary
Ellen Gamel, Totem Association
Marsha Haas, Office of Assistant Superintendent for Instruction
Pat McDowell, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction
Karen Reeves and Ricki Jovanovich, Office of High School Education
Bob Roses, Anchorage Education Association
Mary Kay Sambo, Superintendent's Office
Robin Siegfried, Office of Assistant Superintendent for Support Services