

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

ASD MEMORANDUM #81 (2002-2003)

October 14, 2002

TO: SCHOOL BOARD

FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

SUBJECT: DENALI AWARD RECIPIENTS - SPRING 2002

PERTINENT FACTS:

To Alaskans, Denali means “great one,” and the Anchorage School District is proud to have employees that display greatness in the areas of achievement, service and dedication. Twice each year, a committee of Anchorage School District employees selects several co-workers and one team of colleagues that demonstrate an outstanding commitment to our mission of educating students for success in life.

The Denali Award winners for the second semester of the 2001-2002 school year are Alice Knapp, Mary Kluis, Jack Yandell, David Hren, Morris Pickel, Sharron Harris, Ray Fenton, the Maintenance Department, and Middle School Technology Coordinators.

Alice Knapp is the Librarian for Chugach Optional School. In addition to her regular teaching duties, she invents and completes special projects with tremendous enthusiasm and energy. In the past, she promoted and secured donations for computers for Chugach’s lab, organized World Celebration events and the “Pennies for Peace” campaign, which collected over one million pennies. The proceeds went to support local charities. “Not only did this worthwhile project teach many math lessons,” said supervisor Sharon Meacham, “it also taught an extremely valuable community service lesson.”

Dimond High teacher Mary Kluis has worked with at-risk youth for the past nine years. She saw a need for a computer-based curriculum as an alternative to the standard classroom. After much research, done on her own time, Kluis and her team chose NovaNet. She then worked tirelessly to secure funding and ensure it complied with Alaska Standards. Her students enjoy her room’s nurturing environment with its soft lighting and classical music. Kluis is equally adept at making her students feel welcome each day with a handshake and a smile and

reinforcing their positive qualities. “Students have experienced great success toward their goal of a high school diploma,” says colleague Rosemary Fish.

The horror of losing your life savings in a fire is so devastating that victims are often unable to think their way back to recovery. Thankfully for Small Engine Specialist Houston and Patricia Spires, King Career Center teacher Jack Yandell and his aide David Hren came to the rescue when the couple’s small business had a fire in November. They arranged for a trailer to be donated for storage and for a class of students to come and move the salvageable items into it – all done in less than two hours. “They were the only two people that seemed to care about us,” said Houston. “They still continue to call and see if there is anything they can do.”

Morris Pickel has taught aerospace science for twelve years. Former West High principal Lance Bowie cites Pickel’s superior program management. “Chief Pickel has continually led the AF JROTC unit to the distinction as the best Air Force program in the state of Alaska,” said Bowie. The chief achieved a 20% increase in the unit’s enrollment from the first to the second semester. Bowie adds, “He is known throughout the community as an idea person and a go-getter. Chief Pickel’s the person you talk to if you want something accomplished.”

Baxter Elementary Principal John Andrews says Sharron Harris is an integral part of the Baxter community. “It’s not unusual to see our school’s parking lot packed with the cars of class participants. She works hard to make sure our community school offers a wide range of classes that people are interested in taking.” For many years Harris has been involved with the popular “Community Cache” and also lends a hand for a variety of activities. She runs a very efficient and creative team in the local community school board and regularly attends monthly PTA meetings.

Ray Fenton has given over 20 years of service to the district. As director of Assessment and Evaluation Ray provided the curriculum coordinators with measurable data and the knowledge of how to manage it. He has given extensive support to the math program for reporting test results in ways that are useful to students, parents, teachers and administrators. Colleague Mary Bristol says “Ray Fenton provides access to understanding data that is vital to the foundation of all the work we do.”

When the “perfect snow storm” hit Anchorage this past March, dumping over 27 inches of snow in less than 24 hours, the men and women of the Maintenance Department rose to the challenge, clearing massive amounts from approximately 100 sites in two days. Superintendent Carol Comeau expressed her gratitude for

their leadership and assistance. “Our students were able to ride safely to school because of everyone’s assistance,” she said.

The Team Coordinators for Middle School Technology do it all, from setting up and repairing computers, to teaching, planning, coordinating and “holding hands.” Gail Opalinski, Executive Director for Middle School Education says “teachers, librarians, students, parents and administrators all benefit from their expertise and willingness to assist.” They assist as a team on division-wide initiatives and at their individual schools. Middle School technology coordinators are uniformly respected by other members of the school community.

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 2002 DENALI AWARD NOMINEES

Nominees:

Greg Brown, Dimond High School
Sue Brown, Fairview Elementary School
Chugiak Counseling and Curriculum, Chugiak High School
Martha Collins, Dimond High School
Dimond Advisory Committee, Dimond High School
Robert Dockler, Clark Middle School
Ray Fenton, Assessment and Evaluation
Goldenview Middle School
Darin Hargraves, Operations
Sharron Harris, Baxter Community School
Leo Josey, Fairview Elementary School
Mary Kluis, Dimond High School
Alice Knapp, Chugach Optional School
Maintenance Department
Maintenance & Operations Departments
Middle School Technology Coordinators
O'Malley Resource Team, O'Malley Elementary
Morris Pickel, West High School
Pamela Puls, Fairview Elementary School
Technology Team, West High School
Dennis Tidwell, Risk Management
Jan Thomsson, Dimond High School
Jack Yandell & David Wren, King Career Center

Denali Award selection committee:

Nancy Arnold, Office of the Chief Information Officer
Tracy Bulot, Bowman Elementary School
Michael Graham, East High School
Pat Syta, Kasuun Elementary School
Pat McDowell, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction (01-02)