

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

ASD MEMORANDUM #219 (2003-2004)

April 12, 2004

TO: SCHOOL BOARD

FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

SUBJECT: DENALI AWARD RECIPIENTS - SPRING 2004

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 six co-workers and a team of colleagues that demonstrate an outstanding commitment to its mission of educating students for success in life.

The certificated Denali Award winners for Spring 2004 are David Hall of Chinook Elementary, Amy Goodman, Middle School Literacy Support Teacher, and Jan Thompson of Dimond High School.

In the last two years, David Hall has successfully integrated the Native Culture of Alaska into the P.E. program at Chinook Elementary through the implementation of games and dance. In addition to regular classes, Mr. Hall organizes and supervises afterschool sports and tutors math to seven students. He also accompanies students to track training and competitive events, and introduced a team to the Alaska Native Youth Olympics.

In a letter of recommendation, Mr. Hall's colleague Cheryl Hilmes notes, "The sheer joy with which he carries out his day is an example to all of us. David took a group of about 12 students to the Mountain View Recreation Center for the Native Youth Olympic games. They came because David has a way of inspiring students to reach for opportunities and take advantage of them. He is a hero to many children at our school." Through his experience of traveling to rural villages and love of Native Culture, David Hall encourages an appreciation for ethnic diversity and strives to keep the Native Culture of Alaska alive within the learning community of ASD each and every day.

Amy Goodman has been employed with the District for 23 years, inspires a wide array of individuals as the middle school literacy support teacher. Ms. Goodman strives beyond the bounds of the Language Arts curriculum and includes all subjects into her literacy efforts which include: sharing e-mail tips, demonstrations, training regarding new materials and technologies, presenting at local and national conferences, and writing professional journal articles in her spare time. Middle School Education Executive Director Gail Opalinski considers her “a highly professional, extremely knowledgeable, and self motivated individual in the field of literacy [who] determines the needs of schools and individuals and customizes the training methods that she uses to meet those needs.” She is truly dedicated to supporting and expanding literacy efforts at the individual, building, district, state, and national levels.

Jeanne Fischer, principal of Mirror Lake Middle School also notes, “She was an excellent resource for our November 11 Middle School Fair. She made 10+ contacts and worked with vendors to plan the exhibition. Several of them told me it was the best experience they have had in a long time because of Amy’s preparation.”

Jan Thompson’s efforts as the technology coordinator at Dimond High School are unparalleled. Over the past six years, she has propelled Dimond High to the “cutting edge of technology,” says Dimond High School principal Guy Okada. Ms. Thompson is responsible for placing a laptop computer in the hands of every teacher and providing the training and resources necessary for incorporating the new technology into everyday curriculum. The P.E. Department is now equipped with personal digital assistants, and trained to use them, streamlining the program. Students are also able to retrieve documents and files from virtual lockers; “no other school offers that service and it was Jan’s leadership that made it happen,” says Okada. In addition, Ms. Thompson keeps all of the technology in working order, and maintains the Dimond Web site. She recently received a standing ovation from her peers at a faculty meeting for her uncompromised work ethic. Often seen working after others have gone home, and on Saturdays, “Jan does the work of 3 to 4 people in the private sector but never seeks the limelight. Her focus is always on helping teachers do their jobs more efficiently and on giving students the skills and experience they need to be successful in life and lifelong learners.” Altogether, Jan Thompson has dedicated her time and talent to the District for more than 20 years, and truly deserves the recognition she receives.

The two classified/support staff members receiving Denali Awards are Tammy Miller of Huffman Elementary and Joann Starzec of West High School.

Tammy Miller is the administrative assistant at Huffman Elementary School. She’s also volunteered her time as carnival chairperson, served two terms as the PTA Treasurer, and two more terms as PTA President. Huffman Elementary principal, Jim Kurka, remarks that Ms. Miller has “always maintained professionalism between her job working with the school district and her active volunteerism at school,” and has

“earned the confidence, respect and love of students, staff and the Huffman community.” Ms. Miller goes above and beyond expectations in every pursuit she endeavors. Last Christmas she raised \$500 for a family at her school that wouldn’t have enjoyed a holiday had they escaped Tammy’s notice. Co-workers have observed her giving money out of pocket to students for lunch and field trips. Colleague Susan Koonce remarks, “It’s obvious this is more than a job to her. Her love for children is demonstrated repeatedly each day...she is one of the calmest, nicest, and ‘get the work done’ people we have had the pleasure of working with.” Tammy Miller creates an atmosphere of giving selflessly in the service of children with every task she accomplishes.

West High’s Joann Starzec works as the activities clerk, and is planning to retire this June after 24 years with the District. While she has been “meticulously proficient in her duties as activities clerk,” her most notable attribute has been her ability to create “positive, successful relationships and interactions with colleagues, students and parents. This characteristic supercedes all others by allowing herself and others to view life and our professions from an alternative viewpoint and to turn everyday issues into growing experiences” says Brian Hosken, assistant principal at West High. Mrs. Starzec has earned the honor of receiving the Denali Award by promoting “professional rapport” and “constructive relationships with both students and staff members that endure beyond the confines of the working environment.”

The Denali Award for administration goes to Michael Graham, principal at East High School.

“Mr. Graham is a visionary educational leader who has led East High School through an amazing transition to smaller leaning communities” writes Mary McKean, principal of Bartlett High. She adds that “he encourages a creative, problem-solving approach to the current challenges in education.” Though the implementation of NCLB and the eight-phase remodeling project of East High have increased challenges to all working at the school, staff morale is exceptionally high because of the superior leadership of Michael Graham, and students thrive. In the wake of these accomplishments Mr. Graham shys away from personal recognition, and instead recognizes the staff and students of East High School for creating the top-quality learning environment. Assistant Principal Lou Pondolfino remarks that Michael Graham’s “work ethic, demeanor, and clear vision have been a personal and professional inspiration.”

The Secondary Special Education Team and Community School Coordinators are the joint recipients of the Denali Team Award.

When it comes to Special Education, supervisor Sue Doherty acknowledges the “Dream Team” knows how to get the job done in a positive and professional manner. No matter the challenge, “from disgruntled parents to frustrated teachers and needy kids,” the

Secondary Special Education Team can head off difficult situations before they reach the administrative level or Due Process Hearings. The team is responsible for a multitude of tasks—designing and implementing curriculum, providing staff development and training, interpreting the law, and mediating solutions--these five women are truly devoted to helping students with special needs. “Never in my 31 years of Special Education have I worked with a more talented, dedicated, and cohesive group of professionals,” commends Ms. Doherty. This team displays purpose, compassion, and resolve in every situation.

The Community Schools Coordinators are responsible for bridging our neighborhood schools with the greater Anchorage population. At more than 20 locations 20,000 children and 44,000 adults have participated in learning opportunities offered by Community Schools in the last year. The program has been enhanced by more than 6,000 volunteers, many of whom do not have children enrolled in the District, and raised a significant amount of money through fundraising events. Spanning 13 locations, each of the programs has contributed between \$2,000 and \$10,000 for field trips, equipment, and special purchases for their local schools. This “outstanding team of staff who have worked tirelessly to support student learning, parent involvement, volunteer opportunities and strong ties within the communities they work within...[are] providing a strong foundation on which to build an even stronger future,” says Debbie Bogart. Community Schools have been an integral part of the Anchorage community, and the coordinators have made it all happen.

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/LN

Prepared by: Lori Nakanishi, Communications Specialist

Approved by: Larry Wiget, Executive Director, Public Affairs

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
SPRING 2004 DENALI AWARD NOMINEES

Certificated:

Brenda Councill-Johnson, Chinook Elementary
Patty Devine, Music Department
Amy Goodman, Middle School Literacy Support Teacher*
David Hall, Chinook Elementary*
Shirley Harduar, Central Middle School
Cheryl Hilmes, Chinook Elementary
Susan Koch, William Tyson Elementary
Jean Lenoir, Music Department
Terri Penn, Orion Elementary
Kristi Senden, Service High School
Belinda Sessions, Curriculum
Jan Thompson, Dimond High School*

Classified/Support:

Debra Andrus, Campbell Elementary
Theodis Austin, Baxter Elementary
Sujin Beaumier, Homestead/Ravenwood Operations
Raul Henriquez-Amaya, Lake Otis Elementary
Gayle Heywood, West High School
Tammy Miller, Huffman Elementary*
Toni Reupke, William Tyson Elementary
Cheryl Schwing, Music Department
Joann Starzec, West High School*

Administrator/Principal:

Michael Graham, East High Principal*
Mike Henry, High School Education Executive Director

Team:

Chugiak Elementary Administration
Chugiak High Small Learning Centers Teachers
Community School Coordinators*
East High Security Team
Lake Otis Elementary Special Education Team
Secondary Special Education Team*
West High JROTC Instructors

Williwaw Elementary Support Team
Wonder Park Elementary Professional Development Team

*award recipients

Denali Award Nomination Review Committee:

Scott Batchelder, Acting Assistant Principal, Mirror Lake Middle School

Rhonda Gardner, No Child Left Behind Coordinator

Kathy Griffith, Web Content Specialist, Public Affairs

Betty Hernandez, Executive Secretary, Chief Information Officer

Nancy Miesler, Training Coordinator, 21stCentury Community Learning Center

Robin Siegfried, Assistant Superintendent's Office