



Berwyn teacher Golden Apple finalist



By Bill Ackerman -- St. Leonard School teacher Sara Covington has the full attention of 3rd grader Andres Ramirez as she reads a chapter of "The Last of the Really Good Whangdoodles" by Julie Andrews Edwards to her class. Covington is a finalist for a prestigious Golden Apple teaching award.

By Danya Hooker, dhooker@mysuburbanlife.com

Berwyn Life

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Third-grade teacher Sara Covington may have been an architect had it not been for one stubborn swimmer.

In high school, Covington was looking at architectural programs and teaching swimming lessons when she encountered a student who refused to swim. Throughout the course of a summer, she eventually coaxed him into the water and taught him to swim.

"I thought, whatever I did to reach him, if I could do that everyday with a larger group of kids, maybe we're on to something," Covington said.

Now, Covington, 29, is one of 30 finalists out of nearly 1,000 teachers nominated for the Chicago area's prestigious Golden Apple Awards. Covington has stood

out among her peers for the same attention to the individual that encouraged the timid swimmer.

Lessons are carefully planned to make sure students can see, hear and feel the material. Rather than simply reading about immigration, Covington transforms her classroom into Ellis Island, where her students take on the roles of immigrants.

“I try to use the book more as a resource rather than the focus of the lesson,” Covington said.

Principal Larry White, who co-nominated Covington for the award, said Covington’s attention to each student epitomizes the goals of St. Leonard School.

“She has a quality that you would like all teachers to have,” White said.

Notable

Nearly 1,000 teachers were nominated for this year’s Golden Apple Awards. The 10 winners will be announced in May and will each receive \$3,000, membership in the Golden Apple Academy and a tuition-free spring term sabbatical at Northwestern University.

& quotable

“It’s a team effort. Everyone in this school has contributed in some way to me to being where I am.”

Philosophy

- Recognize each student’s strengths and needs, and tailor lessons accordingly.
- Communicate with and encourage parents to become involved in their child’s education.

Favorites

Lesson Ellis Island simulation

classroom book “Velvetine Rabbit”

hobbies Reading, biking, painting and drawing, movies, traveling, music and spending time with friends and family.