

Sprague School teacher wins Golden Apple

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Sprague School first-grade teacher Peter Schreurs, center, won the prestigious Golden Apple Award for 2009. Officials from the Golden Apple Foundation, parents, teachers and administrators surprised him on Tuesday morning.

By Vincent Pierri | Daily Herald Staff

As a first-grade teacher Peter Schreurs thinks fast on his feet and is always ready for surprises. But he wasn't expecting an entourage of nearly 20 people to show up in his classroom carrying helium balloons and a sheet cake.

Parents, school administrators, local media and officials from the Golden Apple Foundation surprised Schreurs with a prestigious award Tuesday morning.

The Sprague School first-grade teacher won the Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching in grades pre-K through 3. This is his second year teaching at the Lincolnshire school.

"This means so much to me," Schreurs said. "It's truly an honor. We have such fantastic students and parents in this district, I feel so blessed to be here."

The Wauconda man was chosen from a list of 972 teachers from Cook, Lake, Will and DuPage counties. The foundation selects only 10 winners each year. Teachers from Arlington Heights, Palatine, Highland Park and Chicago were also announced as winners Tuesday.

Sprague Principal Christy Adler says Schreurs, 32, is focused like a laser beam and deserves the honor.

"Peter is highly intentional in his instruction," she said. "He engages the students with a clear purpose and solid objectives. He is dynamic, innovative and never wastes time."

This is the second time a teacher at the K-2 school has won the prestigious award. Sue Vani, a first-grade teacher, earned the prize in 1997.

Each winner receives a tuition-free spring-term sabbatical at Northwestern University, a personal computer and \$3,000 in cash from the nonprofit organization.

Parent Karen Friesen's son Tyler is one of the 19 students in Schreurs' class. She said Schreurs has motivated her son to become a self-starter.

"Tyler is becoming an independent learner from Peter's encouragement," she said. "My son is taking ownership for his school work. That's a credit to his teacher."

Officials from Golden Apple echoed those sentiments in a news release about Schreurs.

"Peter always asks his student, 'Who's in charge of your learning?' They all know this opens the door to a world of personal responsibilities for learning."

Schreurs got plenty of hugs from his students during the midmorning surprise party. Seven-year-old Cameron Leonard thinks his teacher is "awesome."

"I actually learn a lot in his class," Leonard said. "He keeps things really organized and we are never bored. For him to be the Golden Apple teacher, that makes me really proud."