

Wood Dale teacher wins Golden Apple honors

By [Elisabeth Mistretta](#) | Daily Herald Staff



Teacher Jeanette Hachmeister gets hugs from her students at Child's Voice School in Wood Dale after winning a 2009 Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching in grades prekindergarten through third on Wednesday.

COURTESY OF CHILD'S VOICE SCHOOL

Teacher Jeanette Hachmeister jokes that she often lays out her lesson plans 10 years in advance.

So although she didn't believe she would actually win a Golden Apple Award, her knack for preparation paid off when veteran teacher did, indeed, win on Wednesday morning and she delivered an acceptance speech she wrote in advance.

Through tears, the Elmhurst woman thanked her parents, family, co-workers, her 28 students and their parents.

"Everyone in this school deserves this," she said. "There are many other hands besides mine that hold this award - sticky little hands, which I clean often - but they are wonderful hands and because of them we can make a difference."

Hachmeister was one of 10 winners, who were selected from among 972 nominations from the collar counties.

Hachmeister has taught students in preschool and kindergarten for 11 years at Child's Voice school in Wood Dale, which helps children who are hearing-impaired. She began teaching 35 years ago.

As part of the application process, Hachmeister submitted nine essays and was evaluated in class twice by Golden Apple.

In her classroom, Hachmeister engages students through music and movement. She often incorporates singing because she says it helps hearing-impaired children learn language patterns and helps their brains solidify what they heard into thought processes. Hachmeister was inspired to work with hearing-impaired children after she suffered hearing loss at age 8, which was later corrected through surgery.

To congratulate Hachmeister on her win, the school threw a party in her honor Wednesday that drew Wood Dale Mayor Ken Johnson and Elmhurst Mayor Peter DiCianni. DiCianni read a proclamation declaring Wednesday "Jeanette Hachmeister Day" in Elmhurst. He also spoke through tears as he commended her and related Hachmeister's contributions to his own child, who lives with autism.

"Helping children who are challenged is, I think, a saintly deed and we have a saint here," he said.

The staff of Child's Voice celebrated with Hachmeister throughout the morning, and many brought her balloons and flowers. Michele Wilkins, the school's executive director, knew of Hachmeister's win in advance and joked that she's been living vicariously through her achievement.

"Here at Child's voice we are like a family, so when a member of your family wins such an award, everyone celebrates," Wilkins said.

Hachmeister remained quiet and humble throughout the morning, thanking well-wishers and receiving hugs from her students. She said she believes teaching is "the greatest job," which is why she's remained at it for more than three decades.

"You get to see miracles every day," she said.

On Sept. 25, she will be honored with fellow Golden Apple winners at the WTTW Chicago Production Center, and the event will later be aired on a prime-time special. She also won a tuition-free spring sabbatical at Northwestern University, a computer, \$3,000, and membership into the Golden Apple Academy of Educators.

Hachmeister was nominated for the Golden Apple by Magdalena Slowinski, a parent of a former student.

"I knew from the bottom of my heart she would win."