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*Carrying forward the best of*  
**NORTHSHORE**  
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# TERRIFIC TEACHERS

# Terrific teachers

By Susan B. Noyes, Laura Hine, Liz Logan and Kathryn Achenbach

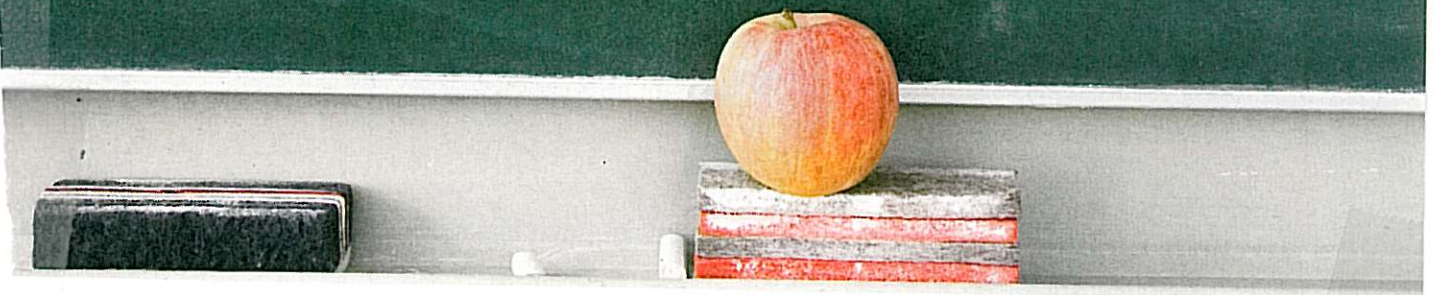
PHOTOS BY JOHN REILLY AND VIOLETTA DOMINEK

Every September, we entrust a major part of the care and mentoring of our children to a new teacher or teachers. And if we're lucky, these individuals give our kids knowledge, perspective and understanding, helping our children become their best selves. Often, they transform and inspire. And they don't ask for much in return. Sometimes, they even educate parents, too!

Knowing how important our teachers are, we asked our readers to nominate those individuals who have made a difference in their or their kid's lives. We got great responses! Heart-

warming emails about the hard-working, truly charitable souls in our community. We tallied up the results and here are your "Terrific Teachers": a teacher who helps kids win the battle with reading; a French teacher beloved by children and adults alike; a passionate physics teacher working to solve problems beyond the classroom; a nurturing Montessori school teacher of more than 25 years; an elementary school teacher who was honored by the Golden Apple Foundation; and a gym teacher who defies stereotypes.

To watch a behind-the-scenes video from our photo shoot of the teachers, visit [makeitbetter.net/teachers-video](http://makeitbetter.net/teachers-video).



## Deborah Graziano

SECOND GRADE TEACHER

*Carpenter Elementary School, Park Ridge*

**I** always ask my students to try to improve what they've written—to make it better," Deb Graziano says.

Deb's natural inclination is to make it better herself, wherever her profession leads her, and this drive earned her a "Teacher of Distinction" award from the **Golden Apple Foundation** in 2009 and the great affection of her Park Ridge community.

She grew up as the oldest of five kids in Mt. Prospect and returned there 13 years ago to raise her two children and teach second grade at Carpenter Elementary School.

"We are delighted that Ms. Graziano's passion for teaching and her love of learning have been acknowledged by other master teachers in her profession," writes District 64 Superintendent Sally Pryor. "Her creativity and focus in the classroom each day are an inspiration to other teachers, and speak to the high standards in District 64."

In order to keep her students engaged, fostering inquisitive-

ness and a passion for learning, Deb adopts techniques above and beyond the district's requirements, such as videotaping her students' current events presentations and making food to demonstrate geometric shapes. She encourages her students to be active: During silent reading, they sit cross-legged on their desks in a position that strengthens their core. Deb also dresses in costume to become different educational characters, including "Doctor Decoder" and "Rhonda Riddles."

Deb's efforts to improve education extend beyond her classroom. She worked with the PTA and the school administration to create a painted mural on a bare wall, and developed the school's courtyard into a **National Wildlife Federation** Schoolyard Habitat, with a solar-powered water fountain and a tadpole pond. Learn how to build one for your school at [makeitbetter.net/solar-fountain](http://makeitbetter.net/solar-fountain).

Deb's commute is easy. "I live across the street from school and walk to work," she explains. She enjoys the deeper connections this fosters.

"I just love what I do," Deb says. "And if you love what you do, you are so fortunate!"

—SBN

*"Her creativity and focus in the classroom each day are an inspiration to other teachers."*

