

Golden Apple Foundation

NEWS RELEASE

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10 Chicago-area teachers named winners of Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching

(CHICAGO — March 15, 2007) Golden Apple Foundation, which is dedicated to recognizing and developing excellence in teaching, today announced the names of 10 Chicago-area winners of the 2007 Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching in grades 9 through 12.

The 10 winners include teachers at three Chicago public schools (Walter Payton, Lindblom and Curie); one Chicago independent school (University of Chicago Lab); five suburban public schools (Evanston Twp., Hinsdale Central, Hinsdale South and Thornton in Dolton); one suburban Catholic school (Fenwick); and one suburban independent school (Lake Forest Academy).

A total of 803 teachers from Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake and Will counties were nominated for the award, which was first presented in 1986. Thirty-two finalists were named in January.

Each of the 10 Golden Apple Award winners will receive a tuition-free fall-term sabbatical at Northwestern University; a personal computer from Apple; \$3,000; and membership in the Golden Apple Academy, which now has inducted 210 expert teachers who work together to ensure that all children have the excellent teachers they deserve.

The Awards selection committee is comprised of distinguished Chicago-area educators. Two selection committee members observed each of the 32 finalists in their classroom and interviewed their principal and selected colleagues, parents and students.

In addition to the 10 Award winners, Golden Apple for the first time is recognizing 10 Teachers of Distinction — Award finalists that the selection committee found their superior teaching work to be notable and laudable. The Teachers of Distinction will be recognized for their distinguished contribution to teaching and asked to participate in Golden Apple programs.

The Award winners and Teachers of Distinction will be honored at an award ceremony on May 12 at the Hyatt Regency Chicago, which subsequently will be aired as a one-hour prime-time special on WTTW/Channel 11.

Detailed lists of the Award winners and Teachers of Distinction follow:

Winners of the 2007 Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching

- **Aaron Becker**
History
Evanston Township HS
1600 Dodge Ave., Evanston
847-424-7500
Aaron designs his classes to help students learn to identify with people in distant places or other eras. He transformed his classroom into a Middle Eastern living room.
- **Kraig Conyer**
Adapted PE
Hinsdale South HS
7401 Clarendon Hills Rd., Darien
639-468-4473
To effectively change the motivation of his students to achieve, Kraig starts by modeling his own passion and enthusiasm. He always pushes his students to do more, and he never gives in when the students want to give up.
- **David Derbes**
Physics
University of Chicago Laboratory HS
1362 E. 59th St., Chicago
773-702-9450
David wants his students to learn how to think better and examine scientific processes with a more skeptical eye. He feels the largest impediments to accomplishing these goals are time and energy. He loves his job, but it takes nearly everything he has.
- **Danna Dotson**
Math
Lindblom Math and Science Academy
6130 S. Wolcott Ave., Chicago
773-535-9300
Danna created a math and science camp with two colleagues to help incoming freshmen become acclimated to higher-level math and science. She feels that if students can experience math through exploring, it makes the learning experience rich.

- **Sam Dyson**
Physics and Zulu
Walter Payton College Preparatory HS
1034 N. Wells St., Chicago
773-534-0034
Sam feels that the experience of learning math and science is like being guided through an exploration of an extended island chain. Having studied Zulu at Yale and taught for one year in South Africa, Sam uses these experiences to offer a weekly seminar on Zulu language and culture.
- **David Eanes**
Music
Thornridge HS
15000 Cottage Grove Ave., Dolton
708-841-5180
David teaches his students to believe and appreciate in “delayed gratification” instead of “instant gratification.” He begins by getting the most out of his students by setting small daily goals. He tries to make these goals simple and achievable to help build self esteem and self image in his students.
- **Joseph Ekpo**
History, Ethics & Moral Theology
Fenwick HS
505 W. Washington Blvd., Oak Park
708-386-0127
Joseph always asks his students to identify the factors that are necessary in character formation and the vices that would impede the formation. He challenges them to put these into practice in their interactions with their families, peers and their involvement in voluntary programs and community services.
- **John Naisbitt**
History
Hinsdale Central HS
55th and Grant Streets
630-570-8556
The most important way John has found to motivate the unmotivated students in class is to show confidence in their abilities and push/pull them into early success. He lets them know that he believes in them even when they themselves do not.

- **Gina Williams**

Fine Arts

Lake Forest Academy

1500 W. Kennedy Road, Lake Forest

847-615-3213

Because Gina believes that inspiration and opportunity are found in the spaces outside the normal framework of the classroom, she tries to creatively overcome the constrictions of the academic schedule. She extends the classroom experience by offering structured studio time in the afternoons and by interjecting weekday excursions and other activities.

- **Melinda Wilson**

Dance

Curie Metropolitan HS

4959 S. Archer Ave., Chicago

773-535-2104

Melinda's best teacher was her mother; she is the reason why Melinda started teaching. Melinda began her career in an alternative high school on the South Side of Chicago. She is devoted to realizing the individuality and potential of each student in her dance classes.

2007 Golden Apple Teachers of Distinction

- **John Belcaster**

History

Northside College Preparatory HS

5501 N. Kedzie Ave., Chicago

773-534-3954

John feels that the single most significant impediment to influencing the development of his students is "convincing them that it is the caring, the considerate, the passionate, and the inquisitive – not the blindly intelligent or the gifted fortunate few – who make our lives worth living and our world worth our presence."

- **Jeffrey Berger-White**

English

Deerfield HS

1959 N. Waukegan Rd., Deerfield

224-632-3000

What matters most to Jeffrey is how to get his students to feel the power of literature and to hear the call of their own stories. His goals for each group come from thinking about the last day of the course.

- **William Bultman**
Music
Lincoln-Way Central HS
 1801 E. Lincoln Hwy, New Lenox
 815-462-2100
William teaches his music students that there are things worth doing that none of us can do alone. He compares his lessons to sports — there is usually a losing team and everyone may not get to play. In a music ensemble, everyone wins and your number gets called every time.
- **Susan Khalaieff**
History
Geneva HS
 416 McKinley Ave., Geneva
 630-463-3800
Valuing knowledge is something that Susan hopes she models every single day to her students — she wants them to experience joyous learning and feel its power and wonder. She feels the mission of every educator should be to instill the desire for lifelong learning in students.
- **Glenn Lid**
Chemistry
Proviso East HS
 807 S. First Ave., Maywood
 708-449-9539
Glenn states that he is a collage of all of his best teachers and coaches. He brings from them their charm, sense of humor, wit, technique, sensitivity, toughness, flexibility, vision, dedication, knowledge, and most of all, passion.
- **Zakieh Mohammed**
English
Roberto Clemente HS
 1147 N. Western Ave., Chicago
 773-534-4000
Zakieh believes that teaching is a collaboration of individuals and ideas. She wants her students to realize that they can participate in the academic community, and they are accepted without exception if they have ownership of their minds and decisions.

- **John O'Connor**
English
New Trier HS
385 Winnetka Ave., Winnetka
847-784-6538
John wants to engage students on a personal level with every text they study — to help them find their stories inside the literature they read. He has created a series of student poetry readings with other schools and helped organize writing workshops for Chicago students.
- **Scott Reed**
Physics
Niles North HS
9800 N. Lawler Ave., Skokie
847-626-2259
Scott believes that his students need to be given the responsibility to make choices and shape their respective experiences. He says for whatever reason, before students ever experience physics, they are convinced that it is the worst torture that has ever been created.
- **Robert Rodey**
History
Marian Catholic HS
700 Ashland Ave., Chicago Heights
708-755-7565
Robert says that students need to feel confident; that if they make a mistake, neither their peers nor he will humiliate them. This is why he feels the need to make his classroom a safe haven from the sometimes intolerant teenage social subculture that is found in school.
- **Stephanie Skizas**
Vocal Music
Glenbard South HS
23W200 Butterfield Rd., Glen Ellyn
630-469-6500
Stephanie feels that the teachers who have had the most profound impact on her teaching are not teachers by profession. They are her students. Learning is a constant growth for her.