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DALLAS-AREA EDUCATORS, STAFF RECEIVE SURPRISE HOLIDAY GIFT WITH “WORK OF HEART” AWARDS FROM THE CATHOLIC FOUNDATION

Four Grand Award winners receive \$5,000 each; additional 20 winners receive \$500 each

DALLAS – A group of dedicated educators and staff received one extra gift they hadn’t expected this Christmas season – a grant of either \$500 or \$5,000 to spend as they wished. The Catholic Foundation honored 24 teachers, faculty and staff members in local Catholic schools with “Work of Heart” Awards this December.

The Work of Heart Awards were established by an anonymous Dallas family through The Catholic Foundation to honor educators and staff of Catholic lower, middle and high schools located in the Diocese of Dallas. Since 2005, the Catholic Foundation has presented 386 grants totaling \$278,500 to individuals who serve children in 37 area schools. Recipients are nominated by students, teachers, parents, administrators and community members and most receive \$500 as a Work of Heart award winner. In addition to the \$500 awards, The Catholic Foundation will present up to eight Grand Awards of \$5,000 each during the school year.

“During this season of good tidings, it is a privilege to celebrate those whose daily gifts of service to our children go above and beyond by giving them a little something extra this Christmas,” said Edwin M. Schaffler, Foundation president and CEO. “The Catholic Foundation is honored to bestow Work of Heart Awards upon a group of educators and staff whose dedication, talent and kindness has been noticed and appreciated by students, parents, administrators and peers.”

Recipients of the Work of Heart Awards were selected from written nominations submitted to the Catholic Foundation and based on traditional merit criteria including tenure and leadership, acts of kindness or charity, Christian example, mentoring and simply going the extra mile for an individual student, family or the community.

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Three outstanding teachers and an excellent staff member were given \$5,000 as Grand Award winners in the Work of Heart program right before the holidays.

Sandra Brenneman, a biology and psychology teacher at John Paul II High School, receives her Grand Award amidst great praise from the students she inspires. She has been described as patient, kind and enthusiastic and challenges her students with hands-on activities to make the subject matter even more interesting. A student that nominated wrote that she “not only deserves this award, but a special place in everyone’s hearts.”

Gerald Cantalope, the head librarian and AV media and computer specialist at Bishop Lynch High School has received a \$500 Work of Heart award before, but this is his first Grand Award. He is known by students to be a smiling, helpful staff member, whether it’s preparing a slide show, helping a student in the library or teaching a student something new on the computer. A student who nominated him writes, “He has helped brighten my day many a time and he probably doesn’t even know it.”

Regina O’Hara, a seventh and eighth grade English teacher as well as an eighth grade history teacher at St. Pius X Catholic School, also received a Work of Heart award previously to this most recent Grand Award. As a teacher, she has been described as patient, understanding, compassionate and attentive. She also has taken on additional projects, such as heading up the student newspaper and assisting with the eighth grade Prayer Partner program. A parent who nominated her writes, “Mrs. O’Hara has provided stability and consistency to the curriculum and the school for many years. She deserves a Work of Heart Award for her dedication to her students, her school and her profession.”

Helene Mercado, a fourth grade teacher at St. Mark’s School of Texas, receives a Grand Award because of high praise from parents who are thankful for the individual attention she gives to her students and the imaginative ways she makes learning fun. One parent noted that her daughter wants to grow up to be a teacher just like Mrs. Mercado. This parent writes, “Mrs. Mercado is just a very giving and caring person. Her positive attitude and smile in the hallway is contagious. She is a great role model for all teachers and students.”

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The following recipients each received a \$500 Work of Heart Award in recognition of their outstanding service.

Bishop Dunne Catholic School

- Sister Carol George, Middle School Math Teacher
- James Martin, Theology Teacher

The Highlands School

- Alina Maldonado, Spanish Teacher

Holy Trinity Catholic School

- Monica Duyka, Third Grade Teacher

Immaculate Conception School

- Lisa Stobb, Junior High Music Teacher

John Paul II High School

- Pam Chaney, Receptionist
- Paul Philp, History and Theology Teacher

Mount St. Michael Catholic School

- Carol Weberg, Latin Teacher

The Notre Dame School of Dallas

- Theresa Francis, Principal
- Patty McGrath, Math Assistant

Our Lady of Perpetual Help

- Luis "Rogelio" Gonzales, Maintenance Person

Prince of Peace Catholic School

- Pam Mansinghani, Nurse

Santa Clara of Assisi Catholic Academy

- Gloria Rodriguez, Social Studies and Language Teacher

St. Cecilia Catholic School

- Sister Donna Marie Crochet, PreK4 Teacher
- James Graham, P.E. Teacher and Athletic Director
- Angie Silva, Secretary

St. Mark Catholic School

- Sue Hazzard, First Grade Teacher

St. Paul the Apostle School

- Jaya Jonathan, Music Teacher

St. Rita Catholic School

- Carolyn Shaw, Secretary

Ursuline Academy

- Michelle Santosuosso, History Teacher

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To nominate a candidate for the "Work of Heart" Award, please contact the Foundation's Web site at **www.catholicfoundation.com** for instructions on the nomination process. Anyone serving as a full- or part-time employee in a Catholic school located in the Diocese of Dallas may be nominated.

An anonymous family has solely funded the Work of Heart Awards for the past three years and is now inviting like-minded individuals to join them. The family has offered to match individual donations to The Catholic Foundation for the Work of Heart Awards fund up to an undetermined amount, in an effort to permanently endow the program.

Chartered in 1955, The Catholic Foundation was founded by a group of dedicated Catholic laymen with a vision that extended far beyond the charitable needs of the moment. For over 50 years, this independent, nonprofit corporation has dedicated its resources to compassionate charitable giving through grants provided by benefactors through its many planned giving programs. The Foundation has been able to provide approximately \$21 million through hundreds of grants to various religious, educational and charitable organizations within the Diocese of Dallas during its 50 plus years of existence. In addition, donor-advised funds maintained at the Foundation have accounted for many more grants amounting to millions of dollars over the years. **For additional information about The Catholic Foundation, call 972.661.9792.**

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