



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**20 DALLAS-AREA EDUCATORS, FACULTY RECEIVE \$500 WORK OF HEART AWARDS
FROM THE CATHOLIC FOUNDATION**

Principals, teachers and staff nominated by peers, students and parents for these honors

DALLAS – The Catholic Foundation has presented its third round of Work of Heart awards in 2008 to 20 local education professionals for their 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. Each award is presented with a \$500 grant for the winner’s personal use.

Since 2005, the Catholic Foundation has presented 447 grants totaling \$319,000 to individuals who serve children in 37 area schools. Recipients of the Work of Heart Awards were selected from written nominations submitted to The Catholic Foundation by students, teachers, parents, administrators and community members.

The Work of Heart Awards were established and solely funded 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. The Work of Heart Awards fund is now open to donations from anyone wanting to honor these educators and staff. 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.

“We are so thankful for the anonymous family who started the Work of Heart Awards program and the investment they have made in recognizing the individuals who support, teach and guide our children each day,” said Edwin M. Schaffler, Foundation president and CEO. “The Catholic Foundation invites other like-minded individuals and families to support this fund as well, so we may continue to recognize the hard work and dedication of these individuals who play such an important role in shaping our future generations.”

The following recipients each received a \$500 Work of Heart Award in recognition of their outstanding service. Each is listed with a comment from the nomination letter submitted on his or her behalf.

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Bishop Dunne Catholic School

- Laura Hastie, Math Teacher

"This year, she moved up to teach Pre-AP Pre-Calculus and regular Pre-Calculus. Those are demanding courses, and, yet, Mrs. Hastie has managed that most difficult of assignments: meeting and remediating learning gaps while keeping standards high. Laura knows that true competition for our students lies not within the BD walls, but instead, rests on a national and, indeed, global field of competition. Because she is confident in her math and in her students' abilities to learn more than they can imagine, she is accomplishing wonderful work in setting and maintaining high goals for her students. I hear, again and again in the halls and in my own classroom, her students say comments along the lines of, 'I didn't think I could do it, but Mrs. Hastie tutored me, and I did great on the test.' Kind, considerate, intelligent, and caring: these are all words that describe this teacher."

Bishop Lynch High School

- Amy Duke, Algebra/Geometry Teacher

"If it was not for all of Mrs. Duke's time and effort, I can honestly say that I would not be doing nearly as well as I am in school. Mrs. Duke goes beyond the "call of duty" as a teacher in many ways. She is always available for tutoring before and after school. In addition, the overall atmosphere in her classroom makes understanding lessons much less stressful. Mrs. Duke goes out of her way to make a special bond with all of her students. Most importantly, Mrs. Duke is highly respected by her students because she treats everyone with equal respect. Due to this mutual respect, Mrs. Duke has been not only a teacher to her students, but a role model and friend."

The Highlands School

- Lauraine Oberfelder, Lower School Administrator

"Mrs. Oberfelder has a demanding position in which she does more types of work than I can imagine. Lauraine takes the time to listen to teachers, students and parents. She makes sure that everyone is heard and feels their needs or concerns are addressed. She is supportive, humble, friendly and approachable, yet professional and a leader with authority. Mrs. Oberfelder is a steady, smiling presence at the school who gives a wonderful example of a Christian leader to all who see her at work."

- Adam Muller, Middle School English Teacher

"From our Highlands boys' middle school I'd like to nominate an especially astute, highly energetic, and capable educator who truly exhibits great heart, understanding and didactic skill. It is no small accomplishment to be able to motivate middle school students, especially boys, but Mr. Adam Muller, a doctoral candidate in English at the University of Dallas, has proven to be more than up to the task. He has taken our adopted writing program and its specific process and has molded it into a workable model that takes our boys from where they are presently to entice, cajole and motivate them to become better thinkers, readers and writers."

- Isela Tautges, Band Director (also band director at Mount St. Michael Catholic School)

"A band director for many years at various schools, she currently teaches at both The Highlands School and Mount St. Michael Catholic School. What I am particularly happy about is that I notice that, with the inception of the band program here at The Highland School, there is a real love of music that has been engendered. The boys will, on occasion, stop by and show me what they are learning in band – and they are excited about it! Sadly, I recently learned that Mrs. Tautges will retire this year. This is a great loss to two communities of families."

Holy Family of Nazareth School

- Belinda Carmical, Secretary

"When I was at Holy Family of Nazareth in Irving a young woman came to work for us as school secretary. She turned out to be one of the best all-around person with whom I have ever had the pleasure of working. Her name is Belinda Carmical and she still works at the school. If anyone has earned that sort of recognition it is Belinda Carmical."

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Immaculate Conception School, Grand Prairie

- Janet Maher, 1st Grade/4th Grade Math, Science and Art Teacher

"Mrs. Janet Maher has served Immaculate Conception in various fields. She is our Jill of all trades – art, science, math, 4th grade as well as my son's 1st grade teacher. From organizing the Sedar Meals to Science Invention Conventions and teaching kids the benefits of composting, she puts in heart, knowledge and creates fun for all ages. Her science labs make science what it should be: interactive, hands on... students love going to her science classes because they really learn! Mrs. Janet Maher is a beautiful reminder to all of us teachers that these students walking these halls can come back as educators to the future generation. Immaculate Conception was her elementary school and she came back to create some more beautiful memories."

- Linda Santos, Principal

"Ms. Santos is not only the principal of Immaculate Conception School in Grand Prairie, she is the heart and soul of our school. Her strength and leadership have carried our school community through some tough times in the past years. Whether it's to kiss a pig if a goal is met or offer a free dress day as incentive and reward for a job well done, Linda Santos is truly a motivator and quite a good sport. I can honestly say that I don't think there's another principal in the entire diocese that is more loved, respected and admired than she is."

- Sister Loretta Rose Tallas, 2nd Grade Teacher

"Sister Loretta is a silent worker with a silent heart that beats loudly through her actions. She deserves the Work of Heart Award for these two additional and important reasons. Our children experience the spirituality of this beautiful nun both in the classroom and outside even when she takes part in the Staff Talent Show during Catholic Schools Week. Her gracious presence reminds us students, staff and parents that we are Catholics and Catholic education is alive and is the core of our Institution and our universal Catholic family."

Jesuit College Preparatory School

- Diane Camara, Registrar

"I would like to nominate our friend, fellow volunteer and best Treasurer of Hispanic Ministry at St. Rita Catholic Church – Diane Camara. She works as the Registrar at Jesuit and also cares for the students after class or after school at the library. She entered our ministry four years ago, even though she is not from Hispanic descent. She has done endless hours volunteering. She is also very active in Jesuit, as she volunteers there weekend nights to judge student shows, presentations and any extracurricular sports and activities whenever she is asked. She attends all kinds of activities at Jesuit, supporting events, organizing fundraisers, helping at the auction and even at the school Girl Scout meetings. There goes all her free time as you can notice. Her children volunteer too. I have to mention here how brave she goes through a difficult life, does all this with high hopes for her kids, a smile at the future, never a complaint, never sad. St. Rita Hispanic Ministry, St. Rita School, Jesuit Prep and St. Rita Church all are thankful, grateful and better because she is there, and Diane has touched many lives."

Mount St. Michael Catholic School

- Isela Tautges, Band Director (also band director at Immaculate Conception School)

"Mrs. Tautges has served as the band director for Mount St. Michael Catholic School since 1995. Mrs. Tautges has a great gift with teaching and motivating middle school boys as well as girls 'trying to find their niche.' She knows how to have a good time with the students while still holding the students to a higher standard. She is a professional in the best sense of the word, as well as a faithful woman of God."

Notre Dame School of Dallas

- Anita Bagnall, Extended Day Program/Basketball Coach

"She spends so much time with the children one-on-one playing games, occupying their time constructively and making activities fun for the children. Ms. Bagnall also coaches basketball and once again, her sense of fun and enthusiasm shines through. You can well imagine the time and patience it takes to build a team, Ms. Bagnall has done this in a very short time and with virtually no assistance."

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- Jennifer Miller, Intermediate Teacher

"She spends so much time on presenting a challenging curriculum to the children. She doesn't sit back and think they can't do it – she encourages, expects and helps the children achieve academic success. I hope Ms. Miller remains with Notre Dame for years to come and that a Work of Heart Award she is so deserving of indicates that her work is value and appreciated."

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic School

- Tiffany Ahlfors, 7th Grade Teacher

"She is a teacher that has taught us to understand the difference between right and wrong. She has taught us in a fun environment. She is also a funny teacher. The main reason we want to nominate her is because she has made the beginning of this year interesting."

St. Cecilia Catholic School

- Estela Valdez, Computer Science Teacher

"She works really hard on everything. She is a very nice, fun, helpful teacher. She will help you in many ways. She also helps the school a lot – she has made the computer lab amazing. She is a great teacher/friend to the school."

"She has put a lot of effort to helping out the school. There couldn't be anyone more perfect to receive this award."

"Mrs. Valdez gave up the majority of her summer to come to St. Cecilia's to make updates and improvements to the technology we all use here at the school. I think a great big thank you is in order and appreciate the opportunity to nominate such a deserving candidate for this award. And, in case you didn't think she's had enough to do, she's a devoted wife and wonderful mother of three children and has been extending her education. Mrs. Valdez is finishing up her Master's Degree this month! Is there NOTHING Mrs. Valdez doesn't do?"

St. Elizabeth of Hungary Catholic School

- Ernest Ariaz, Maintenance Director

"Turning into the front drive of St. Elizabeth of Hungary School, you will always be greeted with the smile of Ernest Ariaz. Every morning he stands to direct traffic, rain or shine, warm or cold, and yet the smile never fades. This small act epitomizes his spirit. He takes the utmost pride in what he does, never complains and truly finds joy in serving others. His humility and integrity are an inspiration to me and all those who encounter him."

St. Joseph Catholic School, Richardson

- Kim Nguyen, 4th Grade Teacher

"Mrs. Nguyen is truly a teacher that has a vocation for what she does and is able to reach our children individually wherever they are in their needs and motivate them to be the best they can! Her very deep faith allows her to share those wonderful virtues and morals with our children, which affects our homes directly!"

"Kim Nguyen is without a doubt the most caring, giving and effective teacher our family has ever had the privilege of knowing. In our opinion there will never be a teacher more deserving of the Work of Heart award than Kim Nguyen; because her heart, mind and soul are dedicated to her students and her work. For Mrs. Nguyen teaching is not a profession, but a passion. She is doing what God intended for her life's work, and we have been blessed to be a part of that calling."

"This is the first year that my daughter has actually been excited to go to school!"

St. Joseph Catholic School, Waxahachie

- Elaine McNevins, 5th Grade Teacher

"Ms. McNevins demonstrates professional poise and articulateness and seems to really have an incredible amount of understanding for each and every student in her classroom. In addition to her ability to teach to individual student needs, Ms. McNevins seeks to expose her students to the world beyond the four walls of the classroom. To summarize, Ms. McNevins has demonstrated an incredible amount of patience and provides a positive environment for learning that goes beyond the classroom. She utilizes her experience and wisdom to guide our children. She works from the heart and it shows every day."

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St. Mark Catholic School, Plano

- Kristen Hemmig, Transitional Kindergarten Program

"Ms. Hemmig is the most patient, loving and inspiring teacher. She wears many different hats during her busy day with such sweet, energetic students. She may be an educator, a parent, a mentor or even a nurse. She is their first glimpse of Catholic education. Our daughter is so excited about school. She plays school at home and some day she wants to be a teacher. This angel has helped us feel comfortable knowing that our daughter is in very capable loving hands all day long."

St. Paul the Apostle, Richardson

- Barbara Romero, Kindergarten Aid

"Miss Romero works from her heart. She is an angel among us. I would love to see her receive this award because she is long overdue for it. She always has a smile on her face and puts our children first. I'm sure if she wrote a book of all her many years and experiences with kindergarten children, it would be a best seller. Miss Romero deserves this award many times over."

St. Rita Catholic School

- Joe McCann, 5th and 6th Grade Social Studies Teacher

"Hey, just wanted to nominate Mr. McCann at St. Rita Catholic School in Dallas. He's the 5th and 6th grade social studies teacher and he's the best. He's my favorite teacher and he makes kids feel good about themselves."

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. In addition to the \$500 awards, The Catholic Foundation will present up to eight Grand Awards of \$5,000 each during the school year.

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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