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THE CATHOLIC FOUNDATION THANKS 15 DALLAS-AREA TEACHERS, FACULTY WITH WORK OF HEART AWARDS

Honorees receive \$500 based on written nominations from their community

DALLAS – In order to recognize those who influence and help further the growth and education of our youth, The Catholic Foundation presented 15 education professionals from Dallas-area Catholic Schools with Work of Heart Awards. Winners received a \$500 grant for personal use as a thank you for their hard work and dedication to serving students, colleagues, families and their communities.

The Work of Heart Award program was established in 2005 and funded solely by an anonymous Dallas family through the Catholic Foundation. To this day the program has given 486 grants totaling \$442,000 to educators and staff of Catholic lower, middle and high schools located in the Dallas area. This year, The Catholic Foundation has matched the family's contribution to the program.

In addition, the family invites likeminded individuals to join them in recognizing the effort and commitment of the educators and staff in their local Catholic schools. Individual contributions can be made to the Work of Heart Award Fund at the Catholic Foundation.

“The act of charity and generosity of the anonymous family paints a true picture of what the Catholic educational communities try to instill in our children,” said Edwin M. Schaffler, president of the Catholic Foundation. “The Catholic Foundation encourages other individuals to make donations so that we may continue to reward those teachers and staff members who strive to exemplify and teach these Catholic values every day.”

Work of Heart Award recipients are nominated by students, teachers, parents, administrators and community members. This year, the Foundation has formed a committee, with members of its Advisory Council, to read the nomination letters received each month and decide which teachers and staff members will receive a Work of Heart Award. The nominations are judged 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.

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.

All Saints Catholic School

- Joan Simler, 2nd Grade Teacher

“Ms. Simler is a fully dedicated and committed teacher. Her first priority is her student, and she works until late in the evening most days. Children with special needs and learning differences have their needs met in her room. She regularly participates in extra-curricular activities such as Speech and Drama, and does all this with a good attitude.”

Bishop Dunne Catholic School

- Diane Horton, Administrative Assistant

“Ms. Diane Horton has been at Bishop Dunne for 11 years and, in her quiet manner, made a tremendous impact on our school. She has completely rebuilt the guidance office, instituting office systems that work with efficiency and promptness, ensuring that students are served in all their needs for college applications. Ms. Horton’s strength is with our students. Whether she is assisting learning differenced students with the reading of tests, reassuring and encouraging them through a difficult exam or helping the nurse with distressed students, she always puts others’ needs and concerns ahead of her own.”

- Joanne Noller, Early Childhood Development

“Ms. Noller studied early childhood education at St. Mary’s and at night worked on her Master’s degree. She has moderated the camps and retreats for incoming middle school students and volunteers at high school games. She does all this while still finding time to give back to the community through her service at All Saints and holding a part time job to help with loans. Leading by example and guiding others along the way, Ms. Noller exudes confidence as she approaches each task Jesus would, with love and compassion.”

Bishop Lynch High School

- Jeffrey Morrow, Calculus Teacher

“From the moment I met him, I knew Mr. Jeffrey Morrow was a person worthy of my respect. You can tell that he teaches not for the personal accolades, but because he is committed to helping students advance their knowledge and understanding of math. His persona conveys the essence of a good moral man; his steady and quiet disposition reflects the image of the faithful servant who works for the good of others without any fanfare.”

- Jaynie Poff, Director of Finance

“The nature of Ms. Poff’s work is away from the mainstream activities of our busy school and her willingness to always go far beyond the call of duty will never evoke public praise. However, I deeply appreciate her efforts and know that our school is financially healthy because of her professionalism, hard work and dedication to the Bishop Lynch community.”

Good Shepherd Catholic School

- Heather Harrill, Kindergarten Teacher

“I am nominating Mrs. Heather Harrill because she has gone the ‘extra mile’ helping my child become adjusted to school. The first day of school, he cried the minute I left him with Mrs. Harrill, through Mass until the Gospel. When I picked him up, Mrs. Harrill was reassuring that tomorrow would go better. This pattern repeated itself for the next four days and my husband and I were concerned that Mrs. Harrill could only tolerate this for so long. However, she assured us that she would do everything possible to help him adjust. Today, on the 12th day of school, through the grace of God working through Mrs. Harrill, he did not cry. I am so thankful to Mrs. Harrill for the patience and love she showed for my son.”

Holy Trinity Catholic School

- Vicki Neverdousky, School Secretary

"For the past six years, Ms. Vicki Neverdousky has been taking care of the school office and answering the door bell. She is the first person everyone meets when they come to register at the school and she always greets everyone with a warm welcome. Ms. Neverdousky has an uncanny ability to spot an unhappy child walking down the hall or a stressed out parent running in to pay a bill or leave a lunch. In a few minutes, she can get the story out and offer a word of support. Staff, parents and children all recognize Ms. Neverdousky as someone who will 'go the extra mile' for them whenever necessary."

St. Augustine Catholic School

- Carol Catalano, Vice Principal/5th Grade Teacher

"Ms. Carol Catalano is our task master, she does the jobs others avoid. In the past 11 months, she has done more to get our school through accreditation, new teachers, new curriculum and new formats. She is always the first one to volunteer to do these tedious tasks and help the school move forward. I am so glad we have this program and we can honor so many. We are excited to be able to nominate Ms. Catalano this month and I pray she gets full recognition for all she has done."

St. Joseph Catholic School (Richardson)

- Amy Burton, Administrative Assistant

"Mrs. Amy Burton is the first person that anyone who enters St. Joseph Catholic School meets. She makes everyone feel welcome and helps to establish an atmosphere of comfort and trust. I have seen many parents who are visiting our school for the first time, clearly made to feel at ease by Mrs. Burton. She also has a very special way of interacting with the children so that they come into the office and feel free to ask for help or get an answer to a question. Daily, she establishes a real Catholic spirit in our school through this kind of example that is visible to everyone. I truly believe that there are few select people that have the ability to help instill real spirit into a community; Mrs. Burton is one of those special people."

St. Mark Catholic School

- Janet Gerwer, 7th and 8th Grade Math Teacher

"Mrs. Janet Gerwer combines religion into our math schedule by having us pray at the beginning of each class. She treats everyone with the respect they deserve, even if they do not show it back. She lets us ask as many questions as we want, even if they are stupid. She shows a positive attitude when teaching us. Something about her teaching techniques makes learning math fun. Her teaching style is obviously working because most of our class is either in Algebra I honors or Algebra I high or have passed into high school. We would just like to thank her for continuing to teach us for these past two years. We will be departing to different high schools next year, but we will never have such a marvelous math teacher as Mrs. Gerwer."

St. Monica Catholic School

- Patricia Saunders, Art Teacher

"I have been reflecting lately on my time as a parent of two daughters who attended St. Monica. They both had Ms. Patricia Saunders at various times throughout the 10 years we have been there. For the last five years, my girls have taken afterschool art lessons from Ms. Saunders. I have not always been able to afford to pay Ms. Saunders for this invaluable time and out of the kindness of her heart she has always insisted they come anyway. I believe my youngest daughter will pursue a career in the arts in one form or the other and this is a large part due to the influence of Ms. Saunders."

St. Paul the Apostle

- Mary Egan, 6th-8th Grade English Teacher

"Ms. E has been teaching at St. Paul for over 10 years. Every year my eighth grade students write goodbye essays to be read at graduation and every single essay has mentioned Ms. E's outstanding impact on their lives. Her knowledge of the subject matter is phenomenal and she has taken literature to new heights for these students. To our surprise, she announced her final retirement. She is a class act and we will certainly feel the enormous void in our middle school hallway. Her life is lived out by her faith, her love of her family and of course her abundance of students she has taught for the last 40 years."

St. Philip the Apostle Catholic School

- Linda Laudadio, Librarian/6th Grade Language Arts Teacher

“Ms. Linda Laudadio’s charming personality and compassionate heart make her a valuable member of our community here. Many parents, faculty staff and office staff have benefited either from her service or her guidance about issues. What I cherish the most is Linda’s common sense approach and deep loyalty to our school. Her extraordinary interpersonal skills make her a valuable member of the St. Philip family.”

St. Rita Catholic School

- Francis (Patti) Sylvester, 7th and 8th Grade Religion Teacher

“Ms. Patti Sylvester has taught in our Catholic schools for over 35 years, providing quality instruction to the children of St. Rita School and Christ the King with enthusiasm and love for all her students. Ms. Sylvester has mentored a great number of students, many of whom years later still seek her advice and friendship, well into their adult years. I have known Ms. Sylvester personally for over 30 years and I can vouch for her kindness and leadership qualities. She definitely believes in going the extra mile in an effort to help a deserving student.”

St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School

- Sandy Cole, PK-4th Grade Teacher

“Ms. Sandy Cole is a wonderful, loving and gentle teacher of our youngest students. Her kindness permeates her every action, her tone of voice and the love she provides her students throughout each busy day. She is the essence of ‘Christian Example’ for all who come in contact with her. She delights in the energy of each of the students, even those she has to lovingly redirect! Those of us who have had the pleasure to work with her are inspired by dedication and motivated to do better ourselves.”

To nominate a candidate for the “Work of Heart” Award, please visit 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 Grand Awards of \$5,000 throughout 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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