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Area teachers receive top educator awards

ST. CHARLES – Local teachers, administrators and support staff were honored Friday at the 34th Annual Kane County Educator of the Year awards banquet at Pheasant Run Resort Center in St. Charles.

Regional Superintendent Douglas Johnson said the 25 honorees were being recognized as truly exceptional educators.

"As is often the case with exceptional people, they don't perceive themselves as exceptional, but rather see themselves as ordinary people just being themselves," Johnson said. "Community members, students, parents, colleagues, family and friends describe you as people who are kind, dedicated, knowledgeable, skilled, wise, generous, respectful and respected. You are indeed anything but ordinary. You are the best of our best."

Anna Richards, a fourth-grade teacher at Kaneland District 302 John Shields Elementary School in Sugar Grove, was named Elementary Educator of the Year.

"Her dedication to her students is immeasurable," fellow fourth-grade teacher Rachael Wilson said in her nomination of Richards.

Christine Elliott, whose daughter is in Richards' class, added, "Not only is Anna an exceptional teacher, but she also has one of the biggest hearts of anyone I ever met."

Richards also teaches Sunday school and vacation Bible school at her church, Kaneville United Methodist Church and serves as Sunday School superintendent.

Andrew Johnson, who teaches social studies at St. Charles East High School in District 303, was named D.L. Hoeft High School Teacher of the Year.

"Mr. Johnson is one of the happiest, most caring people in our school," junior Jacki Leibforth said in her nomination.

Patrick Carney, whose two sons were in Johnson's class, and who coached track and field with Johnson for five years, described him as "a calm and positive force every day."

Johnson and National Honor Society students have also made contributions to the community in a variety of ways, including a Halloween Food Drive and a Multiple Sclerosis Walk.

Francine Eggleston was named Administrator of the Year for her work as principal of Kaneland McDole Elementary School in Montgomery.

"Her door is always open," McDole paraprofessional Renee Kuryliw said of Eggleston.

PTO President Laura Long said Eggleston juggles students, parents, teachers and community in her role as principal.

"But Francine does it almost seamlessly," Long said. "She is upbeat and very cordial."

Eggleston will take on a new role as special education director for the district next school year.

In other awards, Central District 301 Superintendent Bradley Hawk received the Kane County Regional Superintendent Award. Hawk shared it with media teacher Dave Hatcher at Dundee-Crown High School in District 300.

Also in Central District 301, Ruth Waite of Prairie View Grade School in received the Kane County Support Staff award.

The Kane Educator of the Year Award went to science teacher Deborah Perryman at Elgin High School in District U-46.

Sixth-grade science and geography teacher Michael Adams at Waldo Middle School East Aurora District 131 was named J.L. Hanson Middle School Teacher of the Year. Also at East Aurora, early childhood teacher Carrie Janes received the R.B. Mades Associate Educator of the Year.

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