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Fifteen Renton Teachers Recognized for Excellence in Education

Ahead of the Class Awards Ceremony set for Tuesday, May 9

Four individuals and three teams of outstanding Renton teachers will be recognized as the winners of the Renton Chamber of Commerce Ahead of the Class, Excellence In Education Awards at a ceremony Tuesday, May 9 from 7:00 – 9:00 pm at the Renton IKEA Performing Arts Center and Renton High School Commons, located at 400 S 2nd in Renton. The winners are:

- Brian Hoskins, Vocal Music, Nelsen Middle School
- Jef Rettmann, 11th grade US History, Lindbergh High School
- Gary Sampson, 1st grade, Maplewood Heights Elementary School
- Meghan Scheck, English, Renton High School
- Adrienne DeBlasio and Jane Hasson, Special Education, Benson Hill Elementary School
- Geof Newing and Larry Richter, Robotics, Lindbergh High School
- Ellen Barrett, Misty Brewder, Rachelle Cope, Lauri DeWhitt, Shelly Graham, Ekaterina Terechina and Ginney To, Elementary English as a Second Language, district-wide

Each individual or team of teachers, who demonstrate high standards of professionalism in education, will receive a \$500 cash award at the award ceremony that is free and open to the public.

A selection committee chose the finalists from a pool of nominees who submitted an application, and a team of judges conducted interviews to choose the winners. Over 70 teachers from throughout the Renton area were nominated as individuals or as part of a team. The selection criteria for naming the award winners are based on national standards for teaching.

The Ahead of the Class award program is a partnership between the Renton Chamber of Commerce, Renton public and private schools, and businesses. It is part of the Chamber's effort to provide individuals, businesses, and organizations the opportunity to invest in a brighter and better tomorrow for our young people. The program's aim is to enhance community awareness of the excellence of education in Renton.

The program also provides an opportunity for community partners to show their support for education and our valuable teachers. The Award ceremony is free to the public thanks to this year's Ahead of the Class sponsors. Presenting Sponsor: Foresters; Corporate Sponsors: The Advanced Mortgage Group, King & Bunnys Appliances, The Lakeshore Retirement Community, Marcie Maxwell - Windermere Realtor, McLendon Hardware, and Wizards of the Coast; Reception Sponsors: Popeye's Chicken & Biscuits and Renton School District; Entertainment Sponsors: Alcan Building Maintenance and Renton Education Association; Video Sponsor: Puget Sound Access - Channel 77; and thanks to the Renton School District and Cat's Eye Group Design and Photography.

To RSVP or for more information, call the Chamber at 425-226-4560 or e-mail info@GoRenton.com.

2006 Ahead of the Class Award Winners Information

Brian Hoskins, Vocal Music, Nelsen Middle School

Hoskins has taught vocal music to Nelsen middle schoolers since 1999, and recently completed his masters degree in music education from New York University. This year Hoskins is challenging his students to premiere newly composed music in a community concert. According to Hoskins, "not only do they get to meet and learn from the composer of the music himself, but they also get to perform with the composer, accompanied by local music professionals, in a concert that is being reviewed by national publications and media."

Jef Rettmann, U.S. History, Lindbergh High School

For over a decade, Rettmann has been teaching History at Lindbergh High School, engaging 11th grade students to get involved in the curriculum. He makes contemporary connections to issues studied in the classroom, and students benefit by gaining an understanding of themes such as individual rights vs. the good of the community, and racial freedom and equality and self-segregation. Rettmann has also used the historical documents of his student's families in his classroom, making direct connections between history and his students.

Gary Sampson, 1st Grade, Maplewood Heights Elementary School

Gary Sampson recently spearheaded a project to bring school supplies and information to a local Spanish-speaking community in the form of an *Escuelita*, or little school that took place a week before the beginning of the school year. For four mornings about 35 students from grade K-5 participated in reading, math and arts activities, and parents received information about the school year. Additionally students received gift books and school supplies. These special students started the year on the right foot because of this program.

Meghan Scheck, English, Renton High School

While teaching 9th graders *Romeo and Juliet*, Scheck engaged all sectors of her class by allowing her students to set goals for themselves, and then come up with unique projects to achieve them. Some of the activities they came up with were acting out scenes, creating set designs and costumes, making a soundtrack to a scene, drawing anime-style illustrations of the action, and learning stage combat. These innovative projects allow students to approach learning in their own ways, and connect to the material.

Adrienne DeBlasio and **Jane Hasson**, Special Education, Benson Hill Elementary School

DeBlasio and Hasson work together to create learning opportunities for their special needs students. Often this means altering lessons from the general education science curriculum to meet the needs of the students. One such lesson was in the Science Unit, in which students analyzed ink to see if it is really the color they think it is. By allowing students to demonstrate their understanding in three ways (drawing a picture, dictation, or using the white board), the two teachers address the multi-learning needs of the students, and give students the opportunity to make choices.

Geof Newing and **Larry Richter**, Robotics, Lindbergh High School

Newing and Richter have grown the high school Robotics program and are regularly sought after to help other schools start their own programs. They send students to other high schools, as well as middle and elementary schools to demonstrate their skills and projects, and generate interest in the program. They have also presented the program at a number of state education conferences. The result is that the most recent State Robotics Competition attracted 14 high schools and 350 students, a great success.

Ellen Barrett, **Misty Brewder**, **Rachelle Cope**, **Lauri DeWhitt**, **Shelly Graham**, **Ekaterina Terechina** and **Ginney To**, English as a Second Language – Elementary level, district-wide

The seven English as a Second Language teachers work tirelessly to teach their students English so that they can join the standard classes at their grade level. Their work last year allowed more ESL students to exit to standard classes in one year than the previous three years combined. Additionally, the teachers are teaching ESL student's parents English at night. They have set up a program for parent classes that help adults learn basic English, job search skills, and what to say when calling school. This program is key, as it allows students to practice English at home as well as at school.