

West County Ed. Fund names teachers of the year

By Kimberly S. Wetzel West County Times

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Each year, the Ed. Fund, a nonprofit that fosters student learning and achievement in West County, honors teachers who create innovative teaching methods that strike a chord with students.

This year, six West Contra Costa school district teachers, one non-teaching employee and a student have been named the Ed. Fund's 2009 excellence in education honorees.

Teachers Tiffany Carrico of El Cerrito's Portola Middle, David Flores of Richmond's Grant Elementary, Farnaz Heydari of El Sobrante's Olinda Elementary, Linda O'Conner of El Cerrito High, Yasmin Reyes of San Pablo's Lake Elementary and Joyce Tanaka of Hercules' Lupine Hills Elementary will take home teacher of the year awards at a banquet scheduled for May 15. Adams Middle School site supervisor Robert Turner and Hercules Middle/High junior Janelle Salazar will take home honors as well.

Teachers Don Wilson of Pinole Valley High, Diane Sullivan of Richmond's Washington Elementary and Laudia Velez of Olinda were honorable mentions.

"Our teacher award winners are brilliant, kind, and self-reflective," said Jennifer Henry, executive director of The Ed. Fund. "They are of the highest caliber."

O'Conner was nominated for her years of consistent math instruction. She uses techniques that provide academic and social benefits to students. Carrico

gives free music lessons to students to get them started on an instrument. Her jazz band has played at Yoshis and elsewhere.

Reyes, who grew up in El Salvador, had a teacher inspire her to teach kids how to read, which is what she does in her bilingual class. Flores acts as role model, father figure, friend, teacher, coach, and counselor, and runs a program where students participate in soccer and poetry four days a week.

Tanaka created a "Kids in Gardens" Project and runs the lunch time "Striders' Walking Club" for students, while Heydari was nominated for encouraging students to get involved in community service projects. This year she set up a national mock election at the school.

Turner will be given the non-certificated award for his devotion to Adams and for developing strong relationships with the community, while Salazar will be given the citizen award for volunteering as an aide in a special needs classroom.

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If you go: what: The Ed. Fund Excellence in Education Banquet When/where: 5:30 p.m. May 15, Berkeley Doubletree Hotel, 200 Marina Blvd., Berkeley. Cost: \$75 per person, \$25 for WCCUSD students. Sponsorship opportunities are available. Major sponsors include Chevron Richmond Refinery, Upstream Point Molate LLC, the Guidiville Band of Pomo Indians, Bayer Pharmaceuticals, and WLC Architects
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