

Volusia School District Names Catharine Colwell Teacher of the Year



Catharine Hagan Colwell, a physics teacher from Mainland High School, has been named Volusia County Schools' Teacher of the Year for 2008. The announcement was made at a gala banquet at the Hilton Daytona Beach Ocean Walk on Friday, February 9, 2007. The theme for the celebration was "Education: Key to Success."

Mrs. Colwell earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics/Physics from Stetson University and graduated as salutatorian in 1975. Her first job upon graduating from college was teaching physics at Mainland High School, where for 30 years she taught in the same classroom until the opening of the new Mainland High School this school year.

Through aggressive grant writing and expertise in using technology to enhance instruction, Mrs. Colwell's classroom is well-equipped with the latest computers, software and lab equipment. To assist direction of instruction and provide students with additional reinforcement and remediation, she created PhysicsLAB and AlgebraLAB, which allows her to interact with her students from any location at any time of day. Teachers and students are also using these educational websites in states beyond Florida and across the world.

Mrs. Colwell never loses sight of the fact that students come first. She is said to excel in the classroom with energy, enthusiasm and creativity and is someone whose teaching doesn't end at the close of the school day. Her students compete in Volusia County Physics Olympics and since its inception have consistently earned the majority of first, second and third place awards. She has also coached six first place national award-winning Internet Science Technology Fair Teams.

Other top awards for Mrs. Colwell include the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (2001) and being named one of five national semi-finalists for the Alan B. Sheppard Technology in Education Award (2006). In addition, Mrs. Colwell serves as Mainland's technology and grant coordinator and maintains the school's online program of studies. Teaching is her life's mission, and as such, she is known for showing appreciation and love for those around her, which has earned her the nickname "Mrs. Hugs-A-Lot."

In addition to Mrs. Colwell, four other teachers received special recognition as finalists at the Teacher of the Year banquet. Finalists are: Elizabeth Clayton, 2nd and 3rd grade gifted teacher, Port Orange Elementary School; Dhand Presley, 4th and 5th grade exceptional student education teacher, Starke Elementary School; Sherri Prosser, mathematics teacher, Silver Sands Middle School; and Amy Spies, mathematics teacher, Creekside Middle School.

The Teacher of the Year banquet was co-sponsored by FUTURES Foundation, the Volusia County School Board, Progress Energy and Jon Hall Automotive Group. Other sponsors include Daytona Beach News

Journal, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Gateway Computers, Josten's Inc., Kennedy Space Center Federal Credit Union, Nova Southeastern University, Space Coast Credit Union and Votran – County of Volusia. More than 150 businesses and organizations in Volusia County also contributed donations of goods and services to Volusia's Teacher of the Year program.