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## **SPACE CENTER ROTARY NARROWS FIELD FOR TOP TEACHER AWARD**

The field of 48 nominees for the Space Center Rotary Club's annual *Teacher of the Year* award has been narrowed to six, club officials have announced.

The original field represented all 29 schools in the Clear Creek Independent School District. Teachers were nominated by their peers and recommended by their principals. Applications included three essay questions related to the teacher's educational activities and philosophy.

The six finalists, from whom the eventual winner will be selected, will receive Certificates of *Excellence in Education* Awards. These finalists are:

**Mary Beth Barr**. Ms. Barr is a first grade teacher at Walter Hall Elementary with 14 years of teaching experience. Cheryl Stephens, Hall principal, in recommending Ms. Barr, emphasized that Ms. Barr is very involved with each student, keeps abreast of the latest trends and research in education, and is authoring a book to help teachers use puppetry to reach children. Ms. Barr also helped the school receive two grants and receive status as a Professional Development School.

**Gina Cherry**. Ms. Cherry, a first grade teacher at League City Elementary, has 32 years of teaching experience. In her recommendation letter, Principal Debbie Phillips wrote that Ms. Cherry's classes are "magic," with Ms. Cherry surrounding her children in songs, art and playful stories. Ms. Cherry views her students as her little stars, and each day she brings her buffing cloth and polish to buff, polish, guide and teach each of them. Dr. Joy Fowles, Language Arts Coordinator for Clear Creek ISD, added that Ms. Cherry exemplifies the first grade teacher who demonstrates on a daily basis her commitment to every one of her students, providing the nurturing and structure of lifelong learning that begins at this early stage.

**Erin Irvine**. Ms. Irvine is a fourth grade teacher at James F. Bay Elementary, where she is in her seventh year of teaching. According to Principal Nancy E. House, Ms. Irvine "has accomplished more in this short span of time than most educators ever attain in a lifetime of teaching." Her achievements include helping organize the Science Fair,

presenting at the Science Fair Information Night, supporting Bay's first Robotics Team, and involving Bay students in NASA's "Physics Is Fun Day." Ms. House points out that, in fact, Bay was the only area elementary school that sent a team to participate in the day of hands-on science experiments with NASA scientists.

**Gregory Dick.** Mr. Dick, who has 21 years of teaching, is band director at Space Center Intermediate. In his recommendation letter, Jim Stephens, principal of Space Center Intermediate, pointed out that in 1999 Mr. Dick became one of "the very, very few band directors in Texas to have a band make 'back-to-back' appearances at the Texas Music Educators Association in San Antonio." He added that Space Center Intermediate bands always receive Sweepstakes (highest award possible) in University Interscholastic League competitions and music festivals, more students make Region Concert and Symphonic Bands than any other school in the region, and individual students receive the highest possible ranks in the League Solo and Ensemble Contests. In December 1999 Mr. Dick and his band program won the prestigious Sudler Cup, awarded by the John Philip Sousa Foundation to only two middle school bands in the U.S., Canada and Japan.

**James M. Kidwell.** Mr. Kidwell teaches orchestra/beginning orchestra at Clear Lake High School and Brookside Intermediate. With 31 years of teaching experience, he is, according to his associate principal, Nina Zoch, a talented musician and a gifted teacher. Over 100 of his students have been named All-State Orchestra members, 37 have earned Sweepstakes Awards and been named Full Honor Orchestra by the Texas Music Educators Association, and his student orchestras have been named Grand Champion three times and been adjudicated outstanding in San Francisco, New Orleans, Nashville, San Antonio, Orlando, Galveston, Dallas, and Breckenridge, Colorado.

**Judy Lucas.** Judy Lucas has 23 years of teaching experience, the last 12 of which have been at Clear Brook High School where she teaches World Geography, World History, Sociology, American Culture Studies, and Law & Justice. Ms. Lucas's principal, Caryl Carter Robinson, wrote that Ms. Lucas constantly searches for ways to make her teaching more interesting and informative. Comments from Ms. Lucas support this: "School should be fun. Learning through games, activities, and group interaction increases retention of information.... It takes several years of attending conferences and workshops to acquire and to learn how to incorporate more activities into the curriculum.... I have devoted spare time...to teach teachers how to use activities...."

Club spokesperson Visette Sun said the winner of the 10th annual *Teacher of the Year* award will be announced May 8.

The finalists will each receive a golden teacher's apple, a certificate and \$300. The *Teacher of the Year* for Elementary and Secondary schools will each receive \$500 and a plaque, and their names will be engraved on the perpetual plaque that is displayed at the Clear Creek ISD district office.

Space Center Rotary is an organization of 185 business leaders in the Clear Lake area. It is affiliated with Rotary International whose motto is “Service above Self.” Space Center Rotary has contributed over \$1 million to charitable causes since its inception. Members of the *Teacher of the Year Committee*, in addition to the Chair Vissett Sun, are Joan Skellenger, Gerald Hurley, Suzi Haddad, Ted Cummings, Greg Penner, and Marie Dalton.