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Five Hazelwood educators receiving honors from local sorority

Iota Phi Lambda Sorority, Inc.'s Alpha Zeta chapter named five educators from the Hazelwood School District to receive Apple for the Teacher awards for their dedicated service to education.

The HSD honorees are: Sherry Alexander, reading specialist, Grannemann Elementary; Rochelle Dampier, instructional specialist, Barrington Elementary; Wanda Jackson, fifth grade teacher, Keeven Elementary; Brandy Williams-Johnson, third grade teacher, Arrowpoint Elementary; and Paula Sanders, fifth grade teacher, Cold Water Elementary. They are among a group of more than 20 educators from the St. Louis metropolitan area being honored by the sorority. The purpose of the Apple for the Teacher award is to "show appreciation to our educators" and has historically been an American Education Week event.

"Being selected to receive the award is an unexpected honor for me," said Sanders. "It is reassuring to know that my service to my kids has been acknowledged and appreciated. On a personal note, I consider my selection as a blessing. I am blessed to be in a place where I have the opportunity to touch young lives."

Sanders has been with the District for 30 years, teaching first, second, fifth and sixth grades.

Jackson has worked in the District for seven years, teaching fourth, fifth and sixth grades. She, too, has special feelings about the award.

"Receiving the Apple for the Teacher award means that somewhere along the way I must have made a big difference in the lives of some of my students," she said. "I have taught for more than 31 years and I am receiving nominations from some of my former students (college grads at that) that I taught when they were in second grade. I must have done something right for them to remember me 30 years later."

“When former students and parents recognize my work, I feel grand! It says that teachers do play a big part in a child’s life, so we should not take teaching lightly. It is a big and needful job!” said Jackson.

Dampier has been an educator for 14 years, and has worked in the District for 12 years. She taught fifth grade for six years and has been in her current role for six years. She said she is “extremely elated to receive the Apple for the Teacher award. I have always been proud to be an educator, but today, I have an additional pride – my selection. I am humbled, I am proud and I am smiling. Thank you!”

Each of the ladies feel the award has provided motivation for becoming a better teacher.

“Because of this award, I feel a renewed sense of motivation and responsibility to the children, parents and the community,” said Dampier. “I have always done my best, but now I know that I can go beyond best and become excellent. I am grateful, I am motivated and I am committed to education.”

Jackson commented that the award motivates her “to continue to learn more to help all the students I have now and will have in the years ahead. I am to help them achieve great things. When you teach, you’re like a mother. You work with and carry them for nine months. You always remember, love, pray for, and help your students. Once they’re your students, they will always be your students and have a special place in your heart. These are some of the beautiful rewards of teaching.”

Sanders said, “This award motivates me to continue to find ways to reach young people, both in and out of the classroom. It is an honor to be a teacher. I have touched the lives of many and I have made a difference.”

The 2009 Apple for the Teacher honorees will receive their awards at a luncheon in November. The first Apple for the Teacher luncheon was held in 1982. A committee selects the winners from nominations by members of the organization based on specific guidelines. As the apple is a symbol of esteem for teachers, the sorority has presented apples in various forms over the years, including ceramic, crystal, brass, paper and edible.

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Photo Information

HSD_ApplefortheTeacherwinners2.jpg – Hazelwood School District teachers Wanda Jackson, Paula Sanders and Rochelle Dampier will receive Apple for the Teacher awards from the Alpha Zeta chapter of Iota Phi Lambda Sorority, Inc. Not pictured: Sherry Alexander and Brandy Williams-Johnson.

The Hazelwood School District serves nearly 19,000 students and is the second largest district in St. Louis County. Communities in the district include Hazelwood, Black Jack, Spanish Lake, a large section of Florissant, portions of Bridgeton, Bellefontaine Neighbors and Ferguson, and several square miles of unincorporated St. Louis County. The mission of the Hazelwood School District is to launch learners on a quest for high standards, fairness and distinguished achievement.