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Education banquet celebrates learning

Northland Regional Chamber of Commerce honors educators, staff, students

By: Stephanie Farebrother, Wed. May 9, 2007 4:54 PM CDT

In a merger of business and education, the Northland Regional Chamber of Commerce hosted the Education Banquet to commemorate those who make a difference in students' lives.

On May 1, the chamber celebrated education in the Northland with more than 1,000 people in attendance, including 250 nominees for awards and scholarships related to education.

"The awards are a way to say thank you for the great job they do in educating our young people," said Sheila Tracey, chamber president.

The mission of the chamber is to enhance business in the Northland, and the banquet is one way to fulfill the mission by uniting the business community with education. More than eight school districts and two counties were represented at the function.

The highlight of the evening was centered in honoring students, teachers, staff, volunteers and business supporters of education in the Northland. North Kansas City Schools received 17 awards.

Jessica Thomas, a sixth-grade teacher at Maple Park Middle School, was one of the five recipients from North Kansas City Schools to win the Excellence in Teaching Award.

Every school in each district nominates a teacher for this category for their excellence in classroom teaching.

Thomas teaches math and science. Her classroom experience is unusual in that she team teaches with Angie Craig. Four years ago they decided to combine their classrooms into one of 54 students.

"It's nice to be acknowledged for the hard work I put in every day and to be noticed for doing my job well," Thomas said.

She said the team teaching allowed her and Craig to build relationships with the students because they do not change classrooms every hour like most other sixth graders.

Thomas was also one of three teachers to receive a scholarship at the banquet. The scholarships were awarded to teachers who want to pursue master's degrees in education.

Northwest Missouri State University-Liberty Campus awarded Thomas \$500 to complete a Masters in Science Education that she is working on and will finish this summer.

Kendra Carpenter, a third-grade teacher at Chouteau Elementary also was awarded the Excellence in Teaching Award and a scholarship. Grantham University awarded Carpenter a graduate degree scholarship, covering all her schooling costs. Carpenter said he was excited because she was already planning on beginning a master's degree next fall. "It's incredible to have your education paid for in full," she said. She said she loved teaching. "It is so awesome to see a kid stand on their two feet with skills you have taught them," Carpenter said.

About Grantham University:

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