

Teachers Make an Impact

SU's Teachers of the Year

Nineteenth century author Henry Brooks Adams once said that “a teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.” Such is true for the many alumni of Salisbury University’s education programs who are being recognized across the state for the profound influence they have on students.

This spring, four SU alumni and one current graduate student were recognized as Maryland Teachers of the Year, the latest in a succession of those with SU ties to win the prestigious award.

Locally, Wicomico County Teacher of the Year Debbie Wilkins ('75, B.S. elementary education) was selected for her work as a fifth grade teacher at North Salisbury Elementary. In Worcester County, the honoree was Amy Gallagher ('01, M.A.T.), an eighth grade social studies teacher at Stephen Decatur Middle School who also is an adjunct faculty member at SU and mentor for teacher candidates.

In Dorchester County, Teacher of the Year Dawn Chandler ('01, M.Ed.) was honored for inspiring her kindergarten students at Hurlock Elementary School.

Talbot County honored Julie Harp ('94, B.S. biology; '98, M.Ed.), a science teacher and department chair at Easton Middle School and assistant field hockey coach at Easton High School. She is a past member of SU's Tri Beta and Kappa Delta Phi organizations. Queen Anne's County Teacher of the Year Karey Anne Coppage is a second grade teacher at Centreville Elementary School. She is currently pursuing a M.Ed. at SU.

“For a number of years now, alumni from our education departments have demonstrated high levels of success in the classroom, as illustrated by their distinction as both local and state Teachers of the Year,” said Dr. Dennis Pataniczek, dean of the Seidel School of Education and Professional Studies.

Last year, six of the state's 24 local Teachers of the Year—one in four total—were SU alumni, including Somerset County Intermediate School language arts teacher April Todd ('07, M.Ed.) who went on to become Maryland Teacher of the Year. With Todd, three of the past five statewide winners have held strong SU connections, including Worcester County 2006 Teacher of



Debbie Wilkins '75 (left) receives the good news of her Teacher of the Year honor

the Year Michelle Hammond (SU adjunct faculty member) and Wicomico County 2004 Teacher of the Year Aaron Deal ('93, B.S. in psychology, '06, M.Ed.).



Michelle Hammond and April Todd M'07



Dawn Chandler M'01



Karey Anne Coppage



Aaron Deal '93, M'06



Amy Gallagher M'01



Julie Harp '94, M'98



April Todd M'07

Duck! A Last Eraser from Jerry Miller

The auction of "Miller Memorabilia" at the 28th annual Philosophy Symposium honoring Dr. Jerry Miller started out modestly enough. Two recipes, one for his "Cheez Whiz hot dogs" and the other for packaged noodles went for \$15. Then pandemonium broke loose.

Paint-spattered glasses and tennis shoes went for close to \$100. Alumni Jared Espenschied '04, Nicole Vincent '01 and Marissa Powers '99 seemed ecstatic as they clutched their purchases. Student auctioneer Stephen Abresch '08, son of alumnus Craig Abresch '82 and Philosophy Department administrative assistant Linda Abresch, quickly realized the possibilities and egged on the crowd.

Next, Miller's oft worn neon orange ski hat went for \$200 and two of his own photographs for nearly \$500. The piece de resistance, his beloved NAACP jacket, sold in a buyers' frenzy for over \$300! The alumni cartel of Seth Mitchell '79, Bob Miller '86, T.J. Maloney '82 and Craig Abresch who bought it immediately presented it back to a very happy Dr. Miller. Overall, the auction raised more than \$1,200 for the Philosophy Club and future symposia.

The auction seemed to crystallize the sentiment surrounding this master teacher's 35 years of inspiring students to think about the meaning of their lives. In the morning session, alumni and philosophy doctorates Nick Plants '94, Lauren Weis '96, Jason Danner '95 and Katie Kirby '99 commented on Miller's prize-winning essay on the existence of God. Alumni Wendell Taylor '76, Nicole Long '95 and Joe



Mohler '81 spoke about the impact of Miller's teaching on their own professions. The crowd of over 200 contained many alums who came to honor the man who had changed their lives for the better.

Following the program, festivities moved to the Philosophy House to share stories about Miller's bad golf game, his life-endangering driving, his "Miller-meter" personal space habits and, of course, his penchant for throwing erasers. (Customized erasers for the symposium were provided for by alumnus Scott Pegg '01).

Though he plans to spend the next year in his beloved new home in Colorado, Miller has agreed to consider coming back and teaching a course every now and then.



Teacher Wins Greenblatt Award

by Titus Ledbetter III, Staff Writer
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Clarksburg High School teacher Sean Kelly knows that his special education students often feel misunderstood, so his philosophy is to get them to smile so they will be ready to learn.

That reputation for going out on a limb to make learning easier and fun is part of what earned Kelly, 26, of Westminster, this year's Marian Greenblatt Award for his work as a first-year teacher.

He said he loves seeing his students mature in the classroom.

It is really exciting when you realize a group of kids sitting in your room is all yours, Kelly said. It would almost be like an artist with a blank canvas.

The Marian Greenblatt Education Fund, named for a former member of the Montgomery County Board of Education, has been handing out first-year teacher awards annually since 1997.

Kelly coaches the girls' junior varsity lacrosse team and boys' soccer team at the school. He said the best part about working at Clarksburg High School, which is only in its second year of operation, is making personal connections.

Kelly is committed to offering his special-needs students a creative learning environment. He has been known to bring a guitar and sing songs about historic subjects during class.

"The kids I work with have emotional disabilities," Kelly said. "If I was strict, I would have a lot more problems."

Kelly learned many lessons about teaching from his mother, Susan Kelly, who has been a teacher for more than 25 years and a special education teacher at Damascus High School for the past four years.

Kelly said his mother was a big influence in his decision to become a teacher because he watched her enjoy teaching for many years.

Kelly graduated from Salisbury University with a bachelor's degree in neuropsychology in 2004. His path to teaching began the next year when he participated in the Professional Immersion Special Education Cohort Program, which is a partnership between Montgomery County Public Schools and Johns Hopkins University.

Under the program, the county school system will pay for a student's tuition and books if he or she agrees to earn a master's degree in special education from Johns Hopkins and work for the county for five years.

Kelly worked as a long-term substitute last year as he completed his second year of the program and signed on as a full-time teacher last fall. He earned his Master of Science in special education last May.

Marshal Greenblatt, the founder and president of the Marian Greenblatt Education Fund, said he was impressed with how Kelly gives extra effort to connect with his students. Greenblatt said he heard that Kelly dressed up as a leprechaun and hid from students during a field trip to a corn



maze in Frederick County last fall.

Sean Kelly seems to be one of those special people who tries harder to get the job done, Greenblatt said. In today's world, sometimes plain vanilla doesn't work.

Greenblatt said many people, including Clarksburg High School Principal James Koutsos, a special education resource teacher and two parents, recommended Kelly for the award.

Koutsos said Kelly is extremely prepared for the classroom and the entire school community is happy for him.

"He is very innovative and creative in terms of the message he uses to convey information," Koutsos said. "He will do things that are eccentric in order to communicate. The fact that he is willing to try things that are downright fun makes the difference in why so many students connect with him as a teacher."