



NJDOE News

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DOE Announces 2006-2007 State Teacher of the Year

When Karen Ginty was five, she unwrapped her last Christmas present to find a chalkboard – black slate enclosed in an oak frame, with an eraser and chalk.

“Our very own chalkboard,” said Ginty, now a kindergarten teacher at Monmouth Beach Elementary School. “I knew it was exactly what I wanted. I was five, loved kindergarten and could not wait to play school at home.”

The gift has paid off.

Ginty, a kindergarten teacher for 33 years at the same school in Monmouth County, was named the 2006-07 New Jersey State Teacher of the Year today at the monthly meeting of the State Board of Education in Trenton.

“Mrs. Ginty’s enthusiasm and dedication to her field are awe-inspiring,” said acting Commissioner Lucille E. Davy. “For more than three decades, she has worked in the same school and ushered in each new school year with a fresh and friendly outlook and a love of her craft. We are especially honored to recognize her today.”

Patience. Optimism. Care. Love. These are the words Mrs. Ginty’s peers and community members used to describe her. From their letters of support, it is quickly apparent that every child and every parent remembers what kindergarten in Mrs. Ginty’s class means.

“Many times, I have heard someone returning from college or visiting their parents after having moved away from town ask, ‘How is Mrs. Ginty? Is she still teaching?’ ” said former Mayor James P. McConville, whose two children and five nieces were taught by Mrs. Ginty.

“There are dedicated teachers,” said Janet Clayton, a retired school principal at Monmouth Beach. “There are timeless teachers. There are loving and caring teachers. There are teachers with incredible integrity. There are teachers that are superb educators. Then there is Mrs. Karen Ginty.

“She is one of those few, special teachers who possess all of these qualities.”

Ginty graduated from Lynchburg College in 1972 with a bachelor’s degree in elementary education. She began teaching at Monmouth Beach Elementary School, long before full-day kindergarten, that very same year. She later lobbied to bring full-day kindergarten to the Monmouth Beach School District.

“It was immensely successful,” she said.

Ginty received her master’s degree in early childhood education from Kean College of New Jersey in 1978. She continued teaching at Monmouth Beach.

Ginty is a member of her school’s professional development committee and serves as a mentor for novice teachers. She is also a former coordinator of her school’s kindergarten-eighth grade project and is a former member of the planning board of the Monmouth County Association of Kindergarten Educators.

“Learning to accept, respect and care for one another are the values I deem of utmost importance in my classroom,” Ginty said. “A frequent phrase we use in the classroom is ‘share your kindness.’ If you expect children to help each other, then they will. I often praise the children by telling them my heart is singing.”

Ginty said her basic teaching philosophy is simple and direct, and best summed up by the acronym SAIL (students must feel Safe, Accepted and Involved in order to Learn). Such lessons went far for Jean Giodano and her three daughters taught by Mrs. Ginty over the years.

“Karen Ginty is not only the rare breed of person whose name merely being mentioned evokes an ear-to-ear smile, but she is also truly the epitome of all that is good in teaching,” said Giodano, a resident of Monmouth

Beach and a former classroom aide in Ginty's class. "She is always a steady, positive example."

Ginty said her greatest reward to date came at the end of a school year from one of her physically-disabled students. The note read: "Thank you, Mrs. Ginty, for loving me."

New Jersey's Teacher of the Year is selected annually from a list of 22 teachers – 21 County Teachers of the Year and one State Facility Teacher of the Year. All are selected at the school-level and district-levels.

Each spring, county level teachers of the year are chosen and their detailed applications are sent to Trenton, where they are reviewed by a panel of educators representing a cross-section of the state's education community.

As part of the award, Ginty will receive a half-year sabbatical sponsored by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) so that she can travel the state sharing her wisdom. The Department of Education will cover all in-state travel costs. The department will also reimburse Monmouth Beach Elementary School for the cost of hiring substitute teachers for Ginty through December. She will also receive a car leased by the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA).

A complete list of County Teachers of the Year for 2005-06 is online here:

<http://www.nj.gov/njded/educators/rpr/recognition/educators/geoy/ctoy0607.htm>. For more information, please contact the Department of Education Public Information Office at (609) 292-1126.