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**THE CATHOLIC FOUNDATION SPREADS HOLIDAY SPIRIT TO CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**  
*Eighteen Catholic school teachers and staff receive Work of Heart Awards for dedication to schools and communities*

**DALLAS** – The Catholic Foundation is playing Santa Claus this Christmas, honoring 18 Catholic school educators and staff who display dedication, selflessness and commitment for their schools and communities through their careers. Each honoree will receive a surprise certain to brighten his or her holiday season – a Work of Heart Award and \$500 grant for personal use. Since the establishment of the popular Work of Heart Award program five years ago, The Catholic Foundation has recognized deserving Catholic school teachers and staff through 692 awards totaling more than \$458,000.

“With Christmas right around the corner, we are delighted to recognize the work of individuals who give so much of themselves to their schools, students and communities, and set a great example of what the holidays truly mean,” said Edwin M. Schaffler, CEO and President of The Catholic Foundation. “We hope their stories continue to inspire their colleagues and community members, and we look forward to honoring many more Catholic school teachers and staff as this excellent program continues into 2011.”

Recipients of the Work of Heart Awards were selected from nominations written by students, teachers, parents, administrators and community members. The criteria is based on traditional merit including tenure and leadership, acts of kindness or charity, Christian example, mentoring and simply going the extra mile for an individual student, family or the community.

“The inspiration it brings is immeasurable, and it motivates us to work even harder with renewed spirit and fresh energy,” said a recent recipient of the Work of Heart Award. “It’s also gratifying that someone has noticed our efforts, however small.”

The Work of Heart Award program was established in 2005 by an anonymous Dallas family through The Catholic Foundation. The Catholic Foundation continues the program, providing funding for the grants from its Work of Heart Fund. In addition, individual contributions can be made to the Work of Heart Award Fund at The Catholic Foundation.

The following recipients each received a Work of Heart Award and \$500 in recognition of their outstanding service. Each is listed with a comment from the nomination letter submitted on his or her behalf:

**All Saints Catholic School**

Laura Olson, Administrative Assistant

*“I’ve been gifted with a person who not only keeps the [school’s] finances in amazingly good shape, but also provides for me a balance of every area of school life. She has served on the parish Finance*

*Council and in addition to all this she has made my work here a real pleasure. She's funny, candid and always willing to go the extra mile whenever asked."*

### **Bishop Dunne Catholic School**

Walter Johnson, Director of Students

*"He honestly is the heart and soul of our school. Mr. Johnson teaches as Jesus would. He prefers to guide his students rather than punish them and will serve as an advisor and mediator for any member of our community in need. He also shares the gift of his very talented singing voice. At every Bishop Dunne event, he sings a song or hymn with joy and fervor and so powerfully effective is his voice that he often brings down the house, and people report that his rendition gives them goose bumps."*

Allie Meyers, Art Teacher

*"Today was not one of my best days. I had numerous parent-teacher conferences, my own classes to teach and a room full of students for tutorials. Allie, on her own errands, stopped in to simply say hello and to say that I looked like I needed a smile, so she entered my room and drew me a picture of a cartoon girl smiling. My heart was awakened – God's grace was certainly in the room at that moment. When she noticed that my bulletin board was off the wall and sitting on the floor, she offered to come in and redecorate it before parent-teacher conferences started. I actually teared up at the thoughtfulness of this wonderful teacher."*

### **Cistercian Preparatory Academy**

Janet Bucher-Long, College Counselor

*"By taking the time to get to know each member of our class on the most personal of levels, she helps every boy realize that, with a little luck and a lot of hard work, individual dreams of being a doctor, a lawyer, an engineer, and yes, even a poet, can be fulfilled and surpassed. At any moment, one can find her conversing, in her always dignified manner, with a student in her office about college choices, his academics, or as sometimes is the case, his March Madness Bracket. No matter what, this wonderful woman becomes each year's surrogate Form mother."*

### **Good Shepherd Catholic School**

Catherine Esteban, 3-year-olds Teacher

*"There must be a special place in heaven for the teacher of three-year-olds! Parents say they trust her implicitly with their little ones and end the year amazed by the growth their children have shown. Cathy makes sure there are plenty of proud moments for parents to see their children perform songs and show off what they've learned. Staff members see her live her faith through example in her relationships with others, and lead our school community in beautiful prayer services."*

### **The Highlands School**

Joe and Patricia Bieger, Librarian/Drama Teacher

*"What I think is the distinguishing mark of her [Patricia's] service is the confidence she instills in her students. Under her tutelage, the most unlikely students become heroes onstage. She trains them, and through performance, realizes talents in them that they didn't often realize they had. Joe dedicates no less than a saintly amount of time to The Highlands. Often when his wife is shorthanded, we see him, toolbox in hand creating the sets or running the soundboards during a production. If Patricia doesn't have enough actors, Joe will step into the supporting roles himself just to make the production run on schedule. All of this is an addition to his full-time responsibility as our school librarian. Together, Joe and Patricia give about 120 hours/week to The Highlands. The school depends on them going the extra mile and it would give me great pleasure to see them get recognized."*

Crystal Trowbridge, 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Teacher

*"Mrs. Trowbridge is meek and gentle of heart. Her gentle and caring nature was just what my son's*

*sensitive heart needed to progress in reading. She is attentive to the whole person and is committed to a student's success. She is a responsive supporter of parents, and I appreciate her kind and encouraging words to me. She is a teacher who makes a difference."*

*"What I appreciate most about this young teacher is that in such a few short years of teaching experience, she has applied herself so much that she seems to be a seasoned veteran. In the time I have been at THS, I have noticed that parents seem to have a true, professional trust in her ability to mold and train their children and it is a tremendous blessing to have her here. Last week, our Lower School faculty had the privilege and benefit of hearing her presentation on a new reading program that Mrs. Trowbridge has implemented. As a fellow faculty member, I feel as blessed as my students are to have been taught by her! Her quiet, gentle way of helping others understand is so helpful, and her willingness to help others is truly an inspiration."*

### **John Paul II High School**

Amy Eckler, Academic Decathlon Teacher

*"During the regional academic decathlon, I began to panic and become fearful that I would not do well. Ms. Eckler took me aside and gave me a speech on how I am not alone. That everyone else in the room was as worried as I was. I was just the only one broadcasting it. She told me to go back to the room, take a drink of water and continue studying. This talk helped me keep my focus and then to achieve most of the medals in my category. If it wasn't for her going out of her way to help me, I would not have succeeded."*

*"Walking in a fish to a new ocean, my first class was advisory. As the teacher, I immediately found comfort in her warm smile and willingness to advise and the ocean began to shrink. Every day she wakes up ready to teach. She arrives at school early each day for tutorials and allows anyone to ask her for help reviewing college applications, and stays after school until 5:30 for practice. Dedication only begins to describe this super woman."*

### **Mary Immaculate Catholic School**

Sara Cusick, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher

*"Sara is a huge supporter of all fundraisers that go on at MIS, realizing their importance both as community building events and as a way to keep tuition down. When we have our annual magazine drive in the fall, Sara does a great job trying to get students to reach their goals. She [even] sells and buys magazines herself, this year purchasing over 10 subscriptions! In the classroom, Sara is just as enthusiastic! Her love for reading is amazing and is often what gets the 11- and 12- year-olds to pick up a book and read themselves. She gets the students to 'think outside the box' and really use their heads, instead of just memorizing so they can do well on a test."*

### **Notre Dame School**

Breanna Rivas, Teacher's Assistant

*"Breanna makes every class truly represent the Notre Dame motto of 'learning with love.' She has used her many talents to enrich the learning experiences of our students. A talented artist and musician, she has applied these aptitudes to encourage students to seek out and use their own abilities. She's an active presence in the school and even though she is currently in college, she uses all of her free time to serve the students of Notre Dame. Whether as bus aide, soccer coach, face-painter or tutor, she wears many hats and wears them all with pride."*

Nancy Wiley, Teacher's Assistant

*"Nancy has been with the school for 33 years; she always has a smile and a kind word to all who have*

*the pleasure of day-to-day interaction with her. In addition to being a teacher's assistant, Nancy co-manages the Notre Dame Cheerleading squad of 30 boys and girls. She started a Girl Scout Troop five years ago for 25 Bridges and Vocational Department young ladies; she has been the school yearbook advisory since 1994; and she is very artistically talented. Whenever there is a need, Nancy is the first to volunteer. Her love of the children, her care, concern and nurturing shine as much as the smile on her face and willingness to do whatever is needed anytime."*

### **St. Bernard of Clairvaux Catholic School**

Jeff McCormick, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher

*"Mr. McCormick encourages students to be creative when working their science projects. He keeps a sign on his classroom door that reads: 'Don't underestimate creativity. Remember that Noah's Ark was built by amateurs and the Titanic was built by engineers.' Additionally, when he noticed that the 8<sup>th</sup> grade girls' volleyball team needed help, he got permission from the Athletic Director to coach the team. Ever since Mr. McCormick took over as coach, the girls have won all their games. In the blink of an eye [he] was able to figure out the strengths and weaknesses of each player and thus quickly maximized their playing abilities. Everyone I talk to has many positive things to say about Mr. McCormick."*

### **St. Mark's Catholic School**

Karen Smith, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade English Teacher

*"She is the best teacher I have ever had. This year she is about to have a baby, yet she comes to work every day with a happy, smiling face."*

*"Also, she makes learning fun for the classes and makes her class so much more enjoyable. She is a great teacher and help. I think she is amazing and one of my role models!"*

*"She makes every class so exciting. When I ask my friends which class we are going to next and they say 'social studies' I am filled with joy."*

*"Last year, Mrs. Smith made every class fun. We would do skits, plays, commercials and many more fun activities. I was never good at studying for tests, but her fun activities made it much easier. I would be very happy if she was nominated."*

*"Mrs. Smith is like a second mom to me, and is always there for me and all the other students here at St. Mark."*

*"She took the time to get to know you and always tried to include you in class conversations. She deserves the Work of Heart Award because she cares. I love Mrs. Smith."*

*"She is very nice and she cares for all of us. She is very easy to talk to, like family. She IS THE BEST TEACHER!"*

### **St. Monica Catholic School**

Christie Domingo, Middle School Math Teacher

*"She has always shown her dedication for teaching by being available before and after school for those who need extra help, but really what makes her a 'slam dunk' for the Work of Heart Award is her commitment to tutor a 7<sup>th</sup> grader who has not been able to attend school yet this year. The student has been in the hospital and Miss Domingo has been his tutor [throughout his time there]."*

### **St. Pius X Catholic School**

Mary Dixon, 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Teacher

*"She taught my two daughters 21 years ago and now has my granddaughter in her class. She is every bit as energetic and loving as she was when my daughters were in her class. She takes a genuine interest in all her students and her students genuinely love her. She keeps the parents informed and up to date on all the student activities, successes and areas of concern. I am truly lucky to have her as*

*a teacher of three members of my family.”*

### **St. Rita Catholic School**

Susan Pardo, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Aid

*“She is someone who is especially valuable to working mothers because she runs the Extended Day program. Susan is there to make sure, after they get a snack, that they are able to burn off some energy outside. She and the others are there to help with homework too. She makes the program fun with movies, games, guest speakers and special treats and prizes to keep all ages happy. Sometimes my kids don’t want to go home or complain if we come earlier than usual which speaks volumes of her program.”*

### **St. Thomas Aquinas**

Donna Joachim, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher

*“Mrs. Joachim has high standards for the students and they rise to the occasion. Her instruction style is enthusiastic and dynamic. The students do well on their classwork because of her extremely interactive teaching process, and are highly motivated to be successful in her class. She also rewards acts of kindness between the students and that has raised the level of student behavior. I think she is a great example of teaching with respect and purpose.”*

To nominate a candidate for the Work of Heart Award, please visit the Foundation’s Web site at [www.catholicfoundation.com](http://www.catholicfoundation.com) for instructions on the nomination process. Anyone serving as a full- or part-time employee in a Catholic school located in the Diocese of Dallas may be nominated.

Chartered in 1955, The Catholic Foundation was founded by a group of dedicated Catholic laymen with a vision that extended far beyond the charitable needs of the moment. For 54 years, this independent, nonprofit corporation has dedicated its resources to compassionate charitable giving through grants provided by benefactors through its many planned giving programs. The Foundation has been able to provide approximately \$24 million through hundreds of grants to various religious, educational and charitable organizations within the Diocese of Dallas during its 50 plus years of existence. In addition, donor-advised funds maintained at the Foundation have accounted for many more grants amounting to millions of dollars over the years. **For additional information about The Catholic Foundation, call 972.661.9792.**

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