

NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

NEWS RELEASE

For more information contact Betty VanDeventer 402.471.4537 betty.vandeventer@nde.ne.gov

Nov. 5, 2009

FATHER PLANK OF MT. MICHAEL BENEDICTINE HIGH SCHOOL NAMED 2009 OUTSTANDING WORLD LANGUAGE TEACHER

Father Stephen Plank, Language Department chair at Mt. Michael Benedictine High School in Elkhorn, was recently named 2009 Outstanding World Language Teacher.

Plank received the award at the annual Nebraska International Languages Association fall conference. The award recognizes world language educators who demonstrate creativity and imagination in their teaching and those who promote the study of world language outside the classroom.

Plank is known for helping struggling students and for his ability to instill in his students a love for classic French cinema.

Plank participates in French activities held in the Omaha area, including National French Week Activities, the French Convention, Le Grand Concours and the Auberge de Jeunesse youth immersion. He has also assisted with Creighton University's summer French program for children.

Plank's students are always well prepared, a colleague said, noting that Plank evaluates his students on how well they work together as a team as well as academic criteria.

Plank served as the Nebraska American Association of Teachers of French president from 2003-2005 and has been a member of the Alliance Francaise since 1996. He was named Nebraska French Teacher of the Year in 2007 and has been awarded the Nebraska Department of Education STAR Award for World Languages. Plank will participate in the regional NILA competition.

The following awards were also presented during the conference:

- Sarah Percival, a Westside High School French teacher, received NILA's Outstanding Young Educator award. This award is given to a world language educator who has taught for less than five years and shows potential for extraordinary development in the implementation of classroom strategies. Percival has been an active member of NILA, serving as the 2009 assistant program chair. For the 2010 conference, she will be program chair. Percival is active in the Nebraska American Association of Teachers of French, serves as co-sponsor of the Westside High School French Club and helps host the metro-area French Convention. She is known for having a classroom filled with interesting activities aimed at getting her students actively involved in learning.
- The Outstanding Service Award was presented to Past-President Tricia Suchsland for her years of leadership to the organization.

- The Pro Lingua Award was presented to the Malaika Foundation in recognition of the contributions of friends outside the teaching profession to support Nebraska world language students. The Malaika Foundation's mission is adding an international dimension to learning in Nebraska schools, with the goal of building greater understanding among young people from different global cultural traditions. The Malaika Foundation has sponsored Nebraska students to the World Food Prize Youth Institute as well as teachers to the Asia Society Conference. The foundation has also worked with the Nebraska Department of Education to provide International Education workshops and with the Kenneth Morrison International Fellowships to provide international travel and study program opportunities for Nebraska educators.

The 2009-2010 NILA officers are:

- Past-President: Nila Jacobson of Lincoln Southwest High School
- President: Marlene Knobbe of Guardian Angels in West Point
- President-elect: Kathy DeBoer of Millard Aldrich Elementary
- Vice-President: Melanie Bloom of the University of Nebraska at Omaha
- Secretary: Rebecca Gill Renken of Palmyra High School
- Treasurer: Jill Camargo of Archbishop Bergan High School.