



MONTANA PROFESSIONAL TEACHING FOUNDATION

December 2009 Newsletter

Promoting Great Teaching in Montana

Rewarding & inspiring great teaching in Montana, with your help

Research makes it clear: the key factor in any child's education is the quality of the child's teachers.

It matters more than the child's family income or the education level of the child's parents.

That's why the Montana Professional Teaching Foundation exists: to reward, inspire, and support quality teaching in Montana.

Thanks to our many supporters and donors, the Foundation has had another successful year. It is exciting to watch our programs grow in their scope, reaching out to more and more teachers, affecting more and more Montana school children.

We could not do it without your help. **Many thanks** to all our supporters! And happy holidays.

Eric Feaver, Chair
Montana Professional Teaching Foundation



MONTANA PROFESSIONAL TEACHING FOUNDATION
1232 E 6th Ave
Helena, MT 59601
406.447.1479
Eric Feaver, Chair
Banner photos:
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'Smart enough to teach'

Anne Keith named 2010 Montana Teacher of the Year

Anne Keith wanted to teach as long as she can remember. As a little girl growing up in Helena, she practiced teaching stuffed animals and dolls in a make-believe school-room in her family's basement.

As high school valedictorian, though, adults told Keith she was "too smart" to be a teacher. So she pursued an economics degree and went to work for GE Capital instead.

"But as I sat at a computer figuring out how much money this conglomerate was making," she says, "I remembered my dream. It continued to call me."

Fortunately for Montana's kids, Keith answered the call. She started attending night school—while working full time—to earn her teaching certificate, and never looked back.

The career switch left her with a paycheck less than half the size of what she made at GE Capital. "But I always said I'm not doing it for the money," she says.

Today, Keith teaches 8th grade math, algebra, and communication arts at Chief Joseph Middle School in Bozeman. Keith teaches kids to *enjoy* math. She has been a driving force in setting high standards in Bozeman and elsewhere. She gives every student the confidence to achieve these standards, and she helps thousands of other math teachers nationwide do the same. Her accomplishments have won her many awards and accolades. This fall, Keith added another

(Continued on page 2)



Anne Keith gets students revved up about math.

The Montana Professional Teaching Foundation is proud to sponsor the Montana Teacher of the Year program, one of our flagship programs for rewarding and inspiring great teaching.

Happy Holidays!



Silent auction nets \$2,500 for Foundation's programs

The Montana Professional Teaching Foundation held its annual silent auction October 15, 2009, in Billings. The auction benefits the Foundation's Karen Cox Memorial Grant Program (see page 3) and The Montana Learning Center.

Jingle bells. Every year, the auction offers a great opportunity to do some early Christmas shopping while supporting the Foundation and The Montana Learning Center! Mark your calendar for next year's auction: October 21, 2010 in Helena. The auction takes place in conjunction with the MEA-MFT Educators' Conference.

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Teacher of the Year (from p. 1)

award to the list when she was named Montana Teacher of the Year for 2010.

Sponsored by the Montana Professional Teaching Foundation, the Teacher of the Year program annually recognizes a teacher who exemplifies the very best in the profession.

Keith says she works to create a can-do attitude in each student, so they leave the school year "realizing they *can* and *do* understand math and that it can be enjoyable."

Inspiring others. As Teacher of the Year, Keith will represent Montana in the 2010 National Teacher of the Year event and serve as a spokesperson for the teaching profession.

"I know there are hundreds of other teachers in our state just as worthy," she says. "I would like to tell their stories." Keith also plans to visit college math, science, and engineering classrooms "to spread the message that teaching is a noble profession – every bit as challenging as working in the business world."

Keith's father, Tom Dowling, had this to say about her selection as Teacher of the Year: "[It] only confirmed what I knew. You *are* smart enough to be a teacher." You can read more about Anne Keith, her teaching style and philosophy of teaching at www.mea-mft.org/toy10.html.

Outside the classroom. Keith is active in her church, officiates at swim meets across the state, and volunteers at other sports events. She and her husband have two daughters.

Finalists. Finalists in the 2010 Montana Teacher of the Year event are Carol Pleninger, a science teacher at Havre High School, and Jim Thompson, an English and social studies teacher at Bozeman High School. All three finalists were honored at a gala celebration October 15 in Billings.

Congratulations to these outstanding Montana teachers!



Teacher of the Year finalists, from left: Jim Thompson, Anne Keith, Carol Pleninger, were honored at a gala celebration Oct. 15 in Billings.

2009 Karen Cox Memorial Grant Awards

Billings teacher Karen Cox, one of Montana's great educators, lost her life doing what she loved: working to improve public education. The Montana Professional Teaching Foundation created the Karen Cox Memorial Grant Awards in her honor. The grant program is not intended to replace school funding. Rather, it is meant to assist educators who selflessly reach into their own pockets to pay for classroom supplies. Recipients of the 2009 Karen Cox awards are listed below:



The late Karen Cox

Patty Muir, Laurel Middle School, Laurel. Muir will use her \$500 grant to equip each grade level (5-8) with a Flip camcorder in order to record projects, plays, presentations, and more to share with parents and community.

"So often parents and community only see the finished project such as the final diorama, a poster, an animal habitat, but are unable to see the process that evolved to get to the end," Muir says.

"The process is sometimes more important than the end result, as it may involve group work, research, interviews, and other higher level thinking skills." The easy-to-use \$130 camcorders will allow students to record events and share them via open houses, parent-teacher conferences, and the school web site.

Emily Palmer, Elysian School, Billings. At this small k-8 school, half of the students qualify as low-income and 22 percent are ethnic minority. "While we are proud of the high quality education we provide, we need to more effectively meet the different needs of our students," says Palmer. Her \$500 grant will allow Palmer to buy the software *Inspiration*, a research-based application that helps students plan and organize thoughts for verbal and written projects, research and evaluate ideas in all subject areas, comprehend and communicate ideas verbally and in writing, and increase technology skills.

Rebecca King, 1st grade teacher, Broadwater Elementary, Billings. To help with her goal of making math lessons more interactive and hands-on, King will use her \$300 grant to buy materials including MathStart books and teaching guides; math activity reference books; and manipulatives such as plastic coins, pattern blocks, and connecting rods.

Ross Darner, 5th-8th grade teacher, Evergreen School, Kalispell. Darner's \$500 grant will help pay for staffing, healthy snacks, and field trips for the school's Evergreen Fitness Team, an after-school and summer program. Fitness Team provides students with a health risk evaluation and a personal workout and nutrition program designed to fit their specific needs. "This program receives no funds from the school district," says Darner. "All funds are raised via grants, pizza card sales, car washes, and a school carnival." Due to the high percentage of poverty in the school district, students participate for free.

Geoffrey Habel, 9th-12th grade teacher, Great Falls High School. Great Falls High uses an engaging, fun, project-based learning program called "WarFair" that includes about 600 English, math, science, history,

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Our mission

The Montana Professional Teaching Foundation (MPTF) was created by MEA-MFT in 1996 to promote excellence in teaching and learning in Montana. We do this through the following programs:

1. Montana Teacher of the Year
 2. National Board Certification scholarships and assistance
 3. Montana Educator Forum
 4. Karen Cox Memorial Grant Program (classroom supply grants for teachers)
 5. Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics & Science Teaching
- We continually expand our programs to improve teaching and learning in the Big Sky state. The Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization; donations are tax deductible.

You can help!

There are many ways to support the Montana Professional Teaching Foundation's mission.

1. Use your Albertson's card. The Montana Professional Teaching Foundation participates in the Albertson's grocery stores Community Partners program.

When you sign up your Albertson's card, MPTF earns up to 4 percent of your Preferred Savings Card eligible purchases.

You can e-mail your card number to Cathy Warner (cwarner@mea-mft.org) or register online at www.albertsons.com (click on "In the Community" and then the "Community Partners" logo).

2. Recycle your cell phone. You can help the environment and the Foundation by donating your inactive cell phones to the Montana Professional Teaching Foundation. Send them to Cathy Warner or drop them off at Foundation headquarters, 1232 E 6th Ave, Helena, MT 59601.

3. Make a donation. You'll find a cut-out donation form on page 6.

MONTANA PROFESSIONAL TEACHING FOUNDATION

2008-2009 REASONS FOR OUR SUCCESS

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MONTANA TEACHER of the YEAR

Anne Keith (2010)
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Thanks to all our donors!

Including those who wish to remain anonymous.

To our donors: You deserve to be properly recognized, and we strive for 100 percent accuracy. If we have made an error, please contact the Foundation at 406.447.1479 with corrections.

'Fore' Kids & Education: Lively times at MPTF Golf Scramble

A perfect summer day greeted golfers at the Montana Professional Teaching Foundation's 6th annual golf scramble, "Fore" Kids and Education, at Green Meadow Country Club in Helena July 30, 2009. The event drew a record turnout (76 golfers), netting about \$14,000. Proceeds will benefit the Foundation's programs to promote great teaching and learning in Montana.



Golf scramblers delight in the day. From left, Larry Nielsen, his daughter Amanda, and Tammy Pilcher, all of Helena.

in Montana. Many thanks to the teams and sponsors who made this year's scramble a great success!

The winners:

Net Division 1st Place: "Three Guys and a Lady"—Michele Farmer, Craig Todd, Joe Shupe.

Gross Division

1st Place: "Carroll Hackers"—Bob Stansberry, Dick Franz, Patrick Harris, Ben MacIntyre.

See you next year! Next year's scramble is tentatively scheduled for July 29, 2010 in Helena. Mark your calendar, and start recruiting your team. If you would like to be on the mailing list for the golf tournament, contact Cathy Warner at the Foundation office (406.447.1479).



Karen Cox Grants (from p. 3)

art, business, Montana history, and drama students. "The goal is simply to engage all students in a lesson that encompasses a variety of subject areas and allows them to immerse themselves in a topic that produces real-life learning and gets real life results," Habel says. Results show the program is achieving this goal. Habel's \$350 grant will help purchase art supplies.

National Board Certification

National Board Certification is the highest level of professional certification a U.S. teacher can earn. When Montana teachers undergo the certification process, they improve their own teaching while sharing their discoveries with other teachers around the state. Students all around Montana benefit as a result.

National Board Certification is a rigorous and costly process that takes up to nine months, presenting a major hurdle to many Montana teachers. The Montana Professional Teaching Foundation helps remove this hurdle by providing technical assistance and subsidy scholarships to Montana applicants.

Congratulations to the following teachers who have achieved National Board Certification for 2009-10:

- **Joan Brown, Billings:** Exceptional Needs Specialist/Early Childhood Through Young Adulthood
- **Catherine Caracciolo, Belgrade:** Generalist/Early Childhood
- **Kathleen Devlin, Missoula:** Literacy: Reading-Language Arts/Early and Middle Childhood
- **Steven Eckels, Kalispell:** Music/Early Adolescence Through Young Adulthood
- **Kelly Elder, Helena:** Social Studies-History/Early Adolescence
- **Tiffany Hall, Billings:** Literacy, Reading-Language Arts/Early and Middle Childhood
- **Shannon Matthies, Helena:** Generalist/Early Childhood
- **Susan Stajcar Kenison, Belgrade:** Generalist/Early Childhood
- **Theresa Waite, Billings:** Career and Technical Education/Early Adolescence Through Young Adulthood
- **Leanne Yenny, Bozeman:** Mathematics/Early Adolescence

Nominate for presidential math & science awards

Do you know a great Montana science or math teacher, teaching in grades 7-12, with five or more years of professional teaching experience? Do you think this teacher should get some special recognition? How about a \$10,000 award and all-expense-paid trip to Washington, DC?

If so, take a few minutes to nominate that person for the 2009 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST). The Montana Professional Teaching Foundation administers this program in Montana.

To learn more, visit www.mea-mft.org/paemst.htm. The deadline for nominations is April 1, 2010. Remember, whether a teacher pursues the award or not, it is always a nice recognition to be nominated!

The nomination form should be completed early enough to ensure that the nominated teacher is given enough time to thoroughly prepare an application that reflects exemplary teaching prior to the application deadline. Applications are due by May 3, 2010.

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SUPPORT EXCELLENCE!

Please help the Montana Professional Teaching Foundation enhance the quality of teaching and learning in Montana.

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THANK YOU!



Planned giving

As you think about special gifts for family and friends, please remember the Montana Professional Teaching Foundation. It's easy to donate a planned gift to the MPTF permanent endowment.

Montana taxpayers who make a qualifying gift to the MPTF endowment may be able to take a 40 percent credit against their Montana income tax liability.

Businesses can make an outright gift (as opposed to a planned gift) and may be eligible for a 20 percent credit on their Montana taxes.

For more information on planned gifts, call Cathy Warner at the MPTF office (406.447.1479).