

# Teacher *of the* Month & Year

by Peter Connor



Zach Elementary School kindergarten teacher Sharon Brown is presented with the Teacher of the Month award by Foothills Rotarian Al Kasahara as Club President Denise Juliana looks on.

Rotary recognizes elementary, junior high and high school teachers for individual public service contributions that impact the world outside the classroom.

Colleen Conrad, a language arts teacher at Lincoln Junior High, is the winner of the 2004 Rotary Teacher of the Year award. Conrad's selection from a field of three finalists was announced at an awards luncheon at the Lincoln Center on Sept. 29.

Other finalists for the award, which recognizes outstanding teaching skills in the Poudre School District, included Ed Castro, a sixth-grade teacher at Laurel Elementary, and Bill Dern, a math teacher at Blevins Junior High.

Instrumental in bringing the International Baccalaureate program to Lincoln Junior High, Conrad was named Teacher of the Year for her commitment to service learning. "It's always a difficult choice," said Ron Randle, chair of the 2003-2004 Teacher of the Year committee, "but Conrad really stood out for teaching her students to give back to their communities."

By encouraging proactive service, Conrad's students gain valuable insight and experience. Class lessons showcase the outside world, inspiring students with the idea that they, too, can be a catalyst for real change. Last year, after completing their reading assignments about war-torn countries, Conrad's eighth-grade honors English class raised and donated \$5,000 to landmine deactivation efforts in foreign countries. They exceeded their goal by \$4,000.

Through her classroom teaching and by her example, Conrad's students learn they are citizens of a global community and that they have social responsibilities. As 2004 Teacher of the Year, Colleen Conrad was declared a Rotary International Paul Harris Fellow. In her name, \$1,000 was donated to the Rotary Foundation in support of the many charitable programs it funds throughout the world.

The Rotary Teacher of the Year award is the 1995 brain-

child of Bonnie Titley, a long-time local Rotarian and past president of the Rotary Club of Fort Collins. The purpose of the award is to recognize elementary, junior high and high school teachers for individual public service contributions that impact the world outside the classroom.

The first year it was awarded, the honor went to Leshar Junior High School teacher Carol Ballain, now retired. Ballain spearheaded the adoption of the Rotary Club 4-Way Test Program as an educational tool for ninth-grade speech and civics class students learning ethics, community responsibility and group communication skills.

Since then, the Rotary Teacher of the Year award has expanded into a monthly program and now recognizes outstanding local educators throughout the academic year. Teachers who best exemplify the Rotary motto, "Service above Self," are honored with a Teacher of the Month award. These teachers, in common with Rotarians around the world, promote the principles of service, integrity, recognition of individual worthiness, advancement of international understanding, and personal responsibility to society.

The goal is to recognize at least one teacher in each junior high and each high school every year, and one teacher in each elementary school every other year. Two or three are honored at Rotary meetings each month of the academic year. Honorees are introduced by their school principals, after which each teacher briefly speaks about their passions, goals and ambitions. Each teacher receives a marble desktop vase commemorating their recognition and each becomes a candidate for the Teacher of the Year award.

With input from school principals, faculty, staff and students, 27 teachers were selected as Teachers of the Month during the 2003-2004 academic year. A joint nominating committee of local Rotarians from participating Fort Collins clubs selected three individuals from the candidate pool and named them as finalists for the 2004 Teacher of the Year award. ■



Colleen Conrad