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Pierce Ceremony Honors Milton Foundation for Education's 2005 Outstanding Teacher of the Year Recipients

By Ed Hayward
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Seven town teachers were honored by the Milton Foundation for Education last week with a reception and awards ceremony at the Pierce Middle School auditorium for their selection as Milton's 2005 Outstanding Teachers of the Year.

"This is the best event of the year for the Milton Foundation for Education because it is a night when we get to recognize the great teaching that takes place for our children in the Milton Public Schools," said Carol Rosner, president of the MFE board.

Following a reception, nearly 125 people gathered in the Pierce auditorium to applaud the recipients and listen to the glowing reviews they received from the parents and students who nominated the winners.

The recipients of the annual honor this year were: Stanley Gustafson, Milton High School automotive teacher; Tamara Bauer, Pierce Middle School Latin teacher; Maureen Flanagan, third grade teacher at Glover Elementary School; Daniela Ignagni, second grade teacher at Tucker Elementary School; Kelly Hannon, special education teacher at Collicot Elementary School; and Martine Murphy, second grade French immersion teacher at Cunningham Elementary School.

In addition, the second annual Mary Grassa O'Neill Award, given to a teacher for leadership and dedication to the Milton Public Schools, was awarded to Barbara Seegraber, 12th grade English teacher and retiring chair of the High School

English Department.

The seven recipients have already celebrated with their students. They were surprised with the news and celebratory cakes in their classrooms on Monday, April 25.

The outstanding teacher award program, coordinated by board members Carla Kindt and Laurie Macintosh, is part of the MFE's goal to acknowledge the professionalism, innovation and dedication displayed by the town's public school teachers, counselors and specialists who educate more than 3,400 Milton children each day in four elementary schools, Pierce Middle School and Milton High School.

Endorsed by parents, colleagues and students, the seven honorees bring a combined 110 years of experience to the town's school system.

Tamara Bauer, a Pierce Latin teacher who has worked in Milton for 6 years, told the audience: "Latin is my life. Not only has it been my career, but it's my leisure time, my social life, my volunteer time and my family life."

Stanley Gustafson, who has taught automotive mechanics for 32 years, was nominated by the seniors of this year's Milton High School graduating class.

"I see the students at the other end, after they've learned everything up until the 12th grade," said Gustafson. "They're really well-prepared. In my class they face their first real problem: they have a car, it's broken, they don't have any money and they need it that night."

Collicot Special Education teacher Kelly Hannon, who has been teaching in Milton for 7 years, acknowledged the cooperation she receives from parents. "I'd like to thank the parents because it is really like a big jigsaw puzzle and you have to work together to figure out how to get all the pieces to fit right."

Maureen Flanagan, third grade teacher at Glover, thanked Betsy Buckbinder, the teacher who mentored her at Tucker Elementary when she began her career 15 years ago. "She championed me from day one. Her recommendation made a difference in my becoming a Milton teacher. Thank you Betsy," she said.

Cunningham third grade French Immersion teacher Martine Murphy recounted how she advanced from helping in an

afterschool program, to serving as a teacher's aide to finally earning her certification and working as a full-time teacher. "This award shows that America is a great country. The opportunity is here to work hard and achieve your dreams," Murphy said.

Tucker second grade teacher Daniela Ignagni, who has taught in Milton for 6 years, recognized the support she receives from the parents, teachers, staff and students of her school.

Milton High School Principal John Drottar accepted the Mary Grassa O'Neill Award on behalf of Seegraber, who was unable to attend the ceremony because of illness.

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