

LAMORINDA WEEKLY

[Home](#) | [Read Online](#) | [Archive](#) | [Links](#) | [Advertising](#) | [Contact](#)

[printer friendly](#)

[download pdf](#)

Published April 29th, 2009

Announcing...the 2009 Lamorinda Teachers of the Year!

By Jean Follmer

Lamorinda districts recently announced their 2009 Teachers of the Year (TOY), who will represent their school districts in the Contra Costa County 2009 Teachers of the Year (TOY) competition this year.

Each candidate met specific requirements, including having taught at least five years in their district, having a passion/enthusiasm for students in teaching, are flexible and willing to change/adapt, are innovative, and contribute to the profession beyond the classroom.

The Winners

Lafayette School District



Carol Harris, Reading Specialist
Lafayette Elementary School

Carol Harris has been with the Lafayette School District for 30 years. She began her career with the District as a second and third grade teacher at Happy Valley Elementary School before joining Lafayette Elementary as a Reading Specialist 18 years ago. "I'm very honored to be the Lafayette Teacher of the Year," she said.

Harris was incredibly moved when the faculty gave her a standing ovation after Principal Mary Maddux announced the award in a staff meeting. "I'm really representing the entire staff. After 30 years, it's really wonderful that you've been honored by your peers - it validates all of your work," she said.

A Lafayette resident since 1980, Harris truly loves helping her students with their reading. "My happiest time of the day is when I'm reading a book to my children. Nothing is more rewarding than giving someone the gift of reading. I don't just want

the children to become lifelong readers, I want them to become joyful readers."

Moraga School District



Stephen Nicolini, 7th & 8th Grade English and Language Arts
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School

A 10-year veteran in the Moraga School District, Stephen Nicolini attributes his Teacher of the Year award to his students.

"It's a nice honor and I appreciate the recognition. The kids are really a lot of fun and I owe it all to them," said Nicolini, who loves teaching middle school-aged children. "It's a great age - it's the most fantastic age."

Principal Bruce Burns said Nicolini has a great understanding of the needs of middle schoolers. Burns said Nicolini will have kids "run to the stump" outside to burn off excess energy. "That 45-second jaunt gets the squirrilies out," he said.

Nicolini is able to capture and hold his students' attention in an almost unparalleled way, Burns said, including tossing out Rolos from a plastic cookie jar to elicit class participation.

"It's almost magical how the students understand his routine and follow his guidance - it just happens," Burns said. Burns even credits Joaquin Moraga's recent STAR test results increase to Nicolini. He said Nicolini introduced the James Schafer Writing Program to the school and the test scores in the essay portion "increased significantly last year."

Orinda Union School District



Leslie Eppinger, Computers and Computer Graphics
Orinda Intermediate School

A teacher with the Orinda Union School District for 11 years, Leslie Eppinger started as a third and fourth grade teacher at Glorietta Elementary School. Eight years ago, Eppinger received her Master of Education Technology and moved to Orinda Intermediate School. "It's my dream job. I teach Web design, graphics and sixth grade basic," said Eppinger.

Eppinger is thrilled to be the Orinda Union School District's choice for Teacher of the Year. "I'm so honored to represent the students and my district at the County TOY awards," she said.

A Moraga native, Eppinger attended Los Perales, Camino Pablo, Joaquin Moraga Intermediate, and Campolindo High School. "My mom actually supported the local schools on the Moraga School Board for many years," said Eppinger.

(The Acalanes Union High School District Teacher of the Year will be announced in our May 13 issue.)

Reach the reporter at: jean@lamorindaweekly.com

[Home](#) | [Read Online](#) | [Archive](#) | [Links](#) | [Advertising](#) | [Contact](#)

[back to top](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA