

The 2007 MetLife Foundation Ambassadors in Education

Editor's note: The MetLife Foundation Ambassadors in Education Awards honor public middle school, junior high, and high school educators for outstanding accomplishment in their schools and the communities that surround them. The underlying premise of the award is that schools do a much better job of educating young people when the civic infrastructure of the entire community works to make school environments better, safer, and more connected to the world around them.

“This award celebrates teachers who build bridges between students’ school and community lives,” noted MetLife Foundation president Sibyl Jacobson when the names of the 2007 award winners were announced. “We encourage this year’s winners to keep up the good work and to continue to model best practices that will inspire teachers across the country.”

The program recognizes principals (in even years) and teachers (in odd years). This year, twenty-three middle school, junior high, and high school teachers were selected. They were nominated for the award by students, staff, and faculty of the school, business and nonprofit leaders, mayors, council members, and neighbors of the schools. Selection was by a national panel of previous winners, students, and business and nonprofit sector leaders. Winners receive a crystal apple to commemorate the award, and \$5,000 goes to each school.

The award is a partnership between the National Civic League and the MetLife Foundation, which was founded by MetLife to support programs that increase opportunities for young people to succeed,

give students and teachers a voice in improving education, and develop links between schools and communities.

NCL staff compiled the descriptions given here from interviews with the winners and the nominating letters of their colleagues, students, and community partners.

Clare Grizzard, Baltimore, Maryland

Head of the Fine Arts Department at Roland Park Middle School, Grizzard “has made the arts and community involvement part of who we are and what we do,” writes Carolyn Cole, principal of Roland Park and one of her nominators. “Through partnerships with the Baltimore Opera, Baltimore Symphony, Baltimore Museum of Art, National Gallery of Art, Walters Art Museum, and Young Audiences—to name just a few—our school community has enjoyed artists-in-residency, guest performances, field trips, teaching-artist workshops, and professional development.”

Angela Capucci, Boston, Massachusetts

A world languages teacher at Health Careers Academy, Capucci was recognized for her service learning efforts. “Last year, Angela and her Latina culture advisory students informed family and friends about their community’s health care challenges,” said Barbara Locurto, who oversees service learning grants for high schools in Boston Public Schools. “Specialists from Massachusetts General Hospital and Bouvé College of Health Sciences at Northeastern University visited Angela’s classroom. Students researched teen health issues, conducted

Learning to Teach at Lincoln High

There were few models to draw on when Dina Wright was asked to develop the Teacher Academy at Abraham Lincoln High School in the Sunset District of San Francisco. Luckily, Wright had directed a similar program in Connecticut, so she had a few ideas about where to start.

The San Francisco Unified School District had a \$20,000 grant from the federal government to encourage minority students to go into teaching. Teacher recruitment and retention can be a challenge in large urban districts. “The cost of living in the Bay Area is astronomical,” notes Wright, who moved there from Connecticut several years ago. “Most teachers can’t afford to stay here and establish roots. But San Francisco students already have roots here. If you look within the district, students are more apt to make a career in San Francisco than if you go and recruit on some university campus.”

That was the idea anyway, and three San Francisco schools were chosen to participate in the federally funded program. Today only one is left—the Teacher Academy at Lincoln—thanks to the dedication of Wright and fellow academy teacher Valerie Ziegler.

“We had a passion for getting this program off the ground,” says Wright. “We were relentless.” It meant spending countless hours convincing elementary teachers to take on students as interns and developing a relationship with the local community college to build a solid academy program.

During their junior year, participants take a class called Psychology and Learning, with a particular focus on child development and how children learn, and a course in American history. The academy has a strong service learning component. One day a week, students leave the building and walk down to a nearby elementary school where they work with teachers in the classroom.

Between junior and senior years, academy students take a summer course at City College of San Francisco, where they learn about the credentialing process, classroom health and safety, and more on learning styles and how children learn. The summer session includes more hands-on classroom experience by working with some of the district’s most challenging students, low achievers at the middle school level.

Seniors take half a year of economics and American government from Ziegler, and a full-year course on human development, focusing on child and adolescent development. They continue their once-a-week service learning projects in classrooms, and by this time they have some experience under their belt.

So far, about one hundred students have graduated from the program. “In the beginning it was actually difficult to get students interested in the program,” recalls Wright. “But now that we have been able to build up a solid reputation and more, we have to turn students away because we don’t have enough room in the program.”

Not all academy students chose to become public school teachers. Some may want to work in preschools or become social workers. Others may decide that working with kids isn’t right for them. But most students have a pretty good idea whether they might want to go into teaching by their senior year, giving them a leg up on the average high school student who may not have a clue about his or her career.

Wright already knows how she wants to use the \$5,000 grant that goes to each of the winning schools. Among other things, she hopes to provide small stipends for students who volunteer during the year for a new after-school program targeting children with learning difficulties.

in-school surveys, planned a Website for peers, and published a monthly bilingual newsletter.”

Amy Walters, Charlotte, North Carolina

Walters, an eighth grade math teacher, is South Charlotte Middle School’s community service chairperson. She regularly coordinates student participa-

tion in the Salvation Army’s Project Angel Tree, and Special Olympics. She arranges student visits to Levine Children’s Hospital and to retirement homes around Charlotte. Her work has garnered the respect of everyone, especially students. As Kelly Wright, a former student, explains it: “Mrs. Walters has always been a huge inspiration to me. She’s more than just a teacher to me, she’s a role model,

and I know that these community service projects are very near and dear to her heart. Nobody else is a better candidate for this award.”

Michaelene Kelly, Chicago, Illinois

As an arts teacher at Alice L. Barnard Computer, Math, and Science Center, Kelly formed partnerships in the community to bring arts programs to the school, give incentives to students for good attendance and behavior, and offer field trips to local art museums. She has extended the school’s communication to the larger community by writing press releases about school events and programs and by finding forums to exhibit student art throughout the community. “Ms. Kelly is dedicated to the notion that each and every student should understand their individual roles as citizens of the school, the local community, and the world,” says Cynthia Mills, a humanities teacher at the school and one of Kelly’s nominators. “She designs her curriculum to enrich learning across subject areas and works collaboratively with the Middle Years Team to bring the students new and unique experiences.”

David Bates, Dallas, Texas

Students at the school nominated Bates, an ROTC teacher and coach at Marsh Middle School. Bates is a dedicated educator who, in addition to his duties at Marsh, helps coach the White High School football team. He encourages his students to test their physical limits in a confidence-building course. He also teaches life-saving first-aid techniques. Bates has promoted campus beautification efforts and helped other teachers by organizing textbooks and resources in the school’s book room. He encourages students to assist community members in need with donations to the North Dallas Shared Ministration.

Langston Watras, Dayton, Ohio

Watras, an art teacher at Patterson-Kennedy, is cofacilitator of the school’s Site-Based Management Council. He helps resolve conflicts and creates a

neutral space for stakeholders and their concerns. “His servant leadership philosophy matches his personality perfectly,” wrote Barry Ryder, a fellow teacher and former cofacilitator.

An artist himself, Watras has also established partnerships with the Dayton Art Institute, Dayton Metro Library, and the University of Dayton that allow students to showcase their own works in the community. Diana Quintana, a seventh grader at the school, summed up the benefits of the partnerships in her nomination letter: “The partnerships help the school and the community by helping children with contests where, if you win, you win money for the school, for art supplies, and for the students to keep.”

Tricia Downing, Denver, Colorado

Downing is coordinator of the Executive Internship program at the Career Education Center. The center makes internship opportunities available to high school students who want real-world experience to guide their life choices. Richard Ortner, a businessperson who partners with the center, wrote: “In a very good way, I am envious of the opportunities Ms. Downing creates for her students. It is certainly a program that I wish had existed when I was in high school. Tricia cultivates relationships with community leaders and business professionals on behalf of her students, and her efforts are paying dividends.”

Michael Schaffer, Des Moines, Iowa

An AP (advanced placement) government and macroeconomics teacher at Central Campus, Schaffer has enriched academics and student life by forming partnerships with businesses and organizations. A partnership among the Virtual Trade Mission, the Iowa State Education Association, and the school stands out. This program allowed him to take students to Australia and Vietnam to witness the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit. Susannah Stephens, one of the participating

students, writes: “This year was big because the World Trade Organization inducted Vietnam into it. In Hanoi, twenty-one heads of state, one thousand CEOs, and I attended. This was an eye-opening experience. I feel so connected to the world community now that I have had this opportunity. It would never have been possible had it not been for Mr. Schaffer.”

Jim Sweeney, Detroit, Michigan

Sweeney, a carpentry instructor at Randolph Technical High School, organized a student effort to design and build houses for low-income families. Thanks to a partnership with Northwest Detroit Neighborhood Development and Habitat for Humanity Detroit, students learn valuable marketable skills while they make life better for fami-

Performance as Social Commentary

You have to audition to get into the Frank Sinatra School of the Arts, and the competition is stiff, but students who take drama courses from teacher Robert Frisch are learning a lot more than singing, dancing, and acting.

Not that Frisch has anything against musical theater. He has a degree in it from NYU’s prestigious Tisch School of the Arts. This he earned after years as a working actor in New York City and touring the country with big Broadway shows such as *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Zorba!*

Today Frisch teaches a class called Introduction to Social Drama. After researching, discussing, and viewing documentaries about topical issues—say, censorship, teen pregnancy, peer pressure, or global warming—students write monologues and scenes for public performances.

“Until I started teaching I didn’t really understand what a compelling forum live theater could be for presenting social issues,” notes Frisch. “Theater can be used as an instrument of change, by doing theater work that reveals society’s challenges. It also reveals society’s successes and triumphs. We don’t celebrate those enough. We tend to focus on the negative and not really be grateful for the democracy we are living in.”

Frisch has never been shy about tackling tough issues. His first year at Sinatra, he asked his class to list every derogatory term for a human being they could think of. “By the end of the class there were more than seventy slurs on the blackboard, and we ran out of time,” he recalls. “I assigned them to pick any name they wanted and create a monologue of an original character who had been adversely affected by name calling or who had observed others being affected by the practice.”

The project became a six-month effort resulting in a ninety-minute show called “Names That Hurt,” with fifty students performing fifty-four pieces. Not surprisingly, the show raised eyebrows and concerns among parents and school administrators, so Frisch contacted a representative of the National Conference for Community and Justice, who persuaded Frisch’s principal that the performances had important social value.

Since the first performance, “Names That Hurt” has become a part of the school’s orientation process. It has also been performed at a citywide Department of Education Conference on conflict resolution.

Some ideas for topics have come from outside the classroom. When the U.S. Postal Service was creating commemorative stamps celebrating heroes of the civil rights era, an employee contacted Frisch about creating a performance based on some of the material she had gathered to research the stamps. “Most of my students had almost no working knowledge of the civil rights movement,” notes Frisch, “so we created groups and did a script for each of three events.”

The vignettes focused on three turning points in the struggle for equality: the lunch-counter sit-in in Greensboro, North Carolina; the effort to desegregate school in Little Rock, Arkansas; and the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* case in which the Supreme Court ruled that separate was not equal.

Frisch plans to use the money from the MetLife Foundation Ambassadors in Education grant to pay for technical needs—costumes, lights, and sets—and to make his students’ performance more mobile so they can have “more of a touring schedule.”

lies in the community. “Jim’s actions have helped keep students in school by offering interesting challenges and a source of pride in workmanship in a specialized area of carpentry,” writes Steve Stier, project coordinator for the Randolph Building Arts Lab. “This also helps students understand and appreciate the buildings in their own neighborhoods. Training carpenters that also have a sense of history and skill to preserve the architectural uniqueness of a neighborhood is an extremely valuable service to the students, their communities and indeed, all of Detroit.”

Farley Simons, Fort Worth, Texas

Simons, a teacher and leader of the Junior Cadet Corps (JCC) at Elder Middle School, instills leadership, a sense of community responsibility, and self-respect in students. Elder’s JCC is well known for its annual September 11th Remembrance Ceremony. In addition, students perform community service at events such as the parades for Veteran’s Day and Martin Luther King Day, and the Annual Wreath Laying Ceremony on the Fourth of July at the National Cemetery.

“I can say without reservation,” wrote Precious Poullard, assistant principal at Elder, “the leadership opportunities taught and allowed in the program, the passion Gunnery Sergeant Simon has for the success of the students in JCC, as well as those attending J. P. Elder—coupled with the support of the surrounding community—has made a greater impact on student confidence and achievement than I imagined.”

Beth Thomas, Greenville, South Carolina

An English teacher at Carolina High School, Thomas has done exemplary work as head of the Teacher Cadet program, which sends interested students to tutor at a local elementary school to learn about the responsibilities of being teachers. Students in the program work with the Big

Brothers program, read to children at the YWCA, and work with the Special Olympics. Thomas has also partnered with local businesses to provide shadowing, mock interviews, and instruction on professional etiquette to her students. “This serves both the educators involved as well as the community,” wrote Tycie Stewart, a fellow teacher and nominator from another school. “The ultimate goal that Mrs. Thomas and I share is to make sure that future graduates feel that they can be as successful in their personal and professional lives as anyone else.”

Devon Day, Long Beach, California

In partnership with the local fire department and the Associated Radio Amateurs of Long Beach (ARALB), English teacher Day formed an amateur radio/emergency communications group for students at Wilson Classical High School. Members of the group undergo training to become federally licensed operators in the Amateur Radio Service. Writes Dennis Kidder, president of the ARALB: “Students interface directly with members of the Red Cross, Long Beach Fire Department, and other disaster service workers via amateur radio. For kids, this builds a sense of responsibility to a greater good. They become part of a larger plan for emergency response, representing their school to the community and the government.” The benefits of the program were amply demonstrated by Hurricane Katrina. “Every commercial or governmental communications system failed,” notes C. F. Chel, disaster management officer of the Long Beach Fire Department. But amateur radio operators kept open channels of communication.

Gladys Aldana, Los Angeles, California

Aldana, who teaches history at U.S. Grant High School, combines environmental education and service learning projects. In partnership with students and organizations such as Heal the Bay, ITV Weekend College, Project Learning Tree, and Valley

Glen Neighborhood Association, Aldana converted the school's agricultural area into the Serenity Garden for Wildlife Conservation.

"After my tour of the Serenity Garden, Gladys and I established a partnership to offer community service hours to my college students," said Som Chounlamountry, an instructor at Los Angeles Community College. "Gladys extended an invitation for my students to volunteer and contribute to the development of the garden. All the students who volunteered felt that their time was donated to a great cause."

Sue Cullen Pehrson, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Each year, Pehrson, a vocal music teacher at the Upper Campus of Lake Harriet Community School, organizes and directs two major student performances. PTA members, grandparents, and neighboring businesses come together as a team for the production. Local artists work with students to learn about dance and costume design. Last year, the students performed *The Lion King*.

Pehrson has also led students to perform in community venues such as Orchestra Hall, the Minneapolis/St. Paul Airport, and St. Joseph's Home for Children. "We are lucky to have Sue in our school and active in our community," writes Amy Westerberg, a parent, Girl Scout Council member, and one of Pehrson's nominators. "We are proud to have our children learn from her, and as they grow they always ask how Miss Sue is doing. You know she has touched the lives of many when this happens."

Robert Frisch, New York City

A drama instructor at Frank Sinatra School of the Arts, Frisch worked with students to create dramatic pieces drawn from the life of the streets of New York City. "Mr. Frisch," writes Donna Finn, principal of Frank Sinatra and one of Frisch's nominators, "has been able to use student-generated scripts to

present original productions to the school community and outside organizations addressing social issues such as racism and bias."

As a result of a partnership with the U.S. Post Office, Frisch and his students dramatized the struggles and triumphs of the civil rights movement outside a local church. "By performing in the community," writes student Thomas McElhenney, who also nominated Frisch, "we hopefully taught people important lessons from our shows, such as how prejudices destroy people's lives."

McElhenney points out that partnerships with the Manhattan Theatre Club, the National Conference for Community and Justice, and the U.S. Postal Service allow students to learn valuable skills as artists while also tying them into the life of the larger community through civic engagement.

"My goal is that my drama students reassure our community that there will be young citizen-artists in the future who thrive within their art form, and also feel a deep sense of community service," says Frisch.

Maryann Wolfe, Oakland, California

Wolfe is a social science and English teacher at Oakland Technical High School. One of Wolfe's nominators, attorney L. D. Louis, who coaches for the Mock Trial program in which a number of local schools participate, writes: "Most teachers we have approached find a reason for why this type of activity will not work into their schedule or curriculum. Maryann was not one of those teachers. She has been pivotal in locating motivated students, arranging for meeting space on campus, and acting as a bridge between the attorney coaches, the school, and the student body."

For more than thirty years, Wolfe has worked to extend students' reach into the larger community both within and beyond Oakland. She has been active in raising funds from local businesses and

Learning, Biking, and Belonging

“The whole philosophy of the school,” explains physical education teacher Marjorie Deem, “is that kids learn better by doing than by just reading about it. Experiences are more meaningful and have a longer-lasting effect on their overall education.”

The Compton-Drew Investigative Learning Center is perfectly situated to provide just this sort of experience. Just across the freeway is Forest Park, a vast woodland area that serves as a recreational and cultural hub for the entire city of St. Louis.

“Forest Park, which we use as our training ground, houses the zoo, art museum, science center, and history museum,” says Deem, who coaches the Compton-Drew Bike Club. “Many of our kids have never been to those places. If you are in bike club for a whole year, you will probably get to each of those museums at least twice.”

Deem, who considers herself more of a teacher than a coach, sees the bike club as a way to help kids understand the human body and the health benefits of regular exercise. Typically, the bike club kids aren't the school's most gifted athletes, the students who excel at competitive team sports. In fact, Deem goes out of her way to find kids who aren't involved in extracurricular activities.

“There are some kids that I heavily recruit because they look unhappy,” she admits. “They need to belong to something cool, and when they join bike club they have their own bike club friends. They have a sense of belonging.”

Not to mention a sense of accomplishment and self-esteem. “If you bicycle eleven miles a day, two or three

times a week, that's a success story,” says Deem. “You know you've challenged yourself, and you know what you're made of. It's a confidence builder. I call it my mini-outward bound program.”

Compton-Drew's inner-city bikers also learn about the flora and fauna and history of the region during their annual spring trips along a statewide trail system, which traces the route of Lewis and Clark through Missouri. Last year, club members took an Amtrak train to Jefferson City, where they toured the state capitol. Before they started biking the 110-mile route, they were given a lecture on wildlife by the Missouri Conservation Department.

“It really turned out to be an adventure,” notes Deem, “because part of the trails were flooded, and we had to hire a shuttle service to get around some of the parts that were flooded.”

Deem gives due credit to former Compton-Drew principal Andrea Walker, a MetLife Foundation Ambassadors in Education award winner in 2006, who retired this year. “It was her vision,” says Deem. “Also, we have wonderful parents. This program would not be successful without the volunteers. The parents really do support it to a wonderful degree.”

Bike club isn't for every kid. Some try it and drop out. It can be difficult to juggle academics (bike clubbers have to have passing grades) and a grueling training regime. That in itself, she says, is an important lesson. “I tell them to work their calendars and plan ahead,” she notes. “That's what life is all about.”

organizations for students to participate in Close-Up Washington, D.C., to learn about the nation's political process. She cofounded the Paideia Program, an advanced placement program with emphasis on the humanities. In 2006 Congressman Ron Dellums, who was running for mayor, came to speak to students at her request. Many of her graduates have been accepted to prestigious colleges and universities across the nation. “The ripple of [Wolfe's] teaching is growing,” writes Katrina Brekke-Miesner, a parent

of a student and one of Wolfe's nominators. “Public schools are integral to our democracy. Oakland Tech shines as a possibility for what can be when dedicated teachers, administrators, parents, students, and communities work to change the outcomes.”

Anna Votta, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Votta is a social studies, history, and political science teacher at Girard Academic Music Program

(GAMP). In addition to teaching, she has served as senior sponsor, roster chair, and testing coordinator at the school. She connects her school and students to the community through efforts such as the Greater Philadelphia High School Partnership, which planted greenery and painted murals in the neighborhood. She has coached her students to the semifinals of the Mock Trials Competition and organized students to volunteer with the Red Cross. “As a parent, president of GAMP’s Home and School, and a block captain,” writes Elaine Fera, one of Votta’s nominators, “I can say that Ms.

Votta has played a major role in my daughters’ lives as well as my community. She is an outstanding leader in our community and is loved and respected by everyone.”

Marjorie Deem, St. Louis, Missouri

A physical education teacher at Compton-Drew Investigative Learning Center, Deem was nominated by a parent volunteer in her bicycle club. Deem helped found the Compton-Drew Bike Club. In addition to developing healthy lifestyles, participat-

Butterflies, Hummingbirds, and the Good Community

Admittedly, Gladys Aldana was not the obvious choice to oversee U. S. Grant High School’s community garden project. Aldana teaches history, not horticulture. Her degree from City College of New York was in political science and secondary education.

“When I teach world history, we learn about industrialization and the growth of urban areas,” says Aldana, a native of El Salvador, who moved to Brooklyn from that war-torn country at age thirteen. “I introduce my students to the idea that we need to save some land the way it is, because we have a lot of organisms that depend on natural and wild areas to survive. It is the idea of sharing the resources.”

Even, it turns out, in the wilds of Valley Glen, a neighborhood in Southern California’s densely populated San Fernando Valley. The idea to turn the grounds of Grant High’s defunct agricultural studies program into a refuge for butterflies and hummingbirds can be traced to an unintended lesson in ecosystems. Aldana had taken the lead in campus beautification projects, and in one such effort students planted milkweed in front of the school.

The herbaceous perennial, it so happens, is an important food source for the larvae of monarch butterflies, and soon enough butterflies found their way to Grant High’s small offering of milkweed.

Aldana and students nursed the thirty-some-odd caterpillars that appeared until they were ready to fly. “That gave a

whole new purpose to our gardening,” says Aldana. “Before it was mostly for ornamental purposes; now when we do gardens, we also do them for wildlife.”

Today the two-acre Serenity Garden for Wildlife Conservation sports a pond, greenhouse, compost area, potting room, classroom, butterfly nursery, and about thirty garden plots tended by volunteers from the community. Plants have been selected to attract local forms of wildlife and teach student gardeners about native plant life.

Students working in the garden earn community service credits, sometimes by mentoring younger children, as they learn more about wildlife conservation, the environment, and horticulture.

“Everybody is making a difference,” she says, “whether they moved some soil, planted something, painted something. That’s the beauty of a community project. There are so many layers to it. This May, when we had a celebration, many of my students got to see the people who come in and do work on weekends. They finally got an idea of what a community project is. We all work for something bigger.”

Aldana plans to use the MetLife Foundation Ambassadors in Education grant to allow youth groups from the community to do special planting projects in the garden. She would also like to spruce up a nearby building to use as a community center for meetings and small conferences, all part of Aldana’s idea of “fostering a good community.”

ing students learn about nature conservation, local history, art, and safety through visits to local museums at nearby Forest Park.

Tamara Ford, San Antonio, Texas

Ford, a criminal justice instructor at Lanier High School, took the lead in revitalizing the school's criminal justice program. "One of the major selling points of this program," writes a member of the San Antonio Independent School District's Police Department, "is that the students are taking college-level criminal justice courses and are eligible for college-level credit if they successfully complete the requirements of the course." Ford also started Lanier's Police Explorer group, which engages in various forms of service throughout the community. In addition, individuals from the San Antonio Police Department and the Bexar County Sheriff's Department mentor students in the group.

Dina Wright, San Francisco, California

A psychology teacher at Abraham Lincoln High School, Wright was responsible for developing Lincoln's Teacher Academy program, which allows students to take advanced courses in psychology and human development and places students as teachers in partnering elementary schools. "Mrs. Wright had to establish the academy all by herself by writing a lot of letters to convince administrators that the academy was a good way for students to bond to each other as well as with the students they teach," writes one of Wright's students, who also nominated her. Students in the program can move on to teaching internships, and Wright maintains relationships with universities to help her students move on to higher education if they so choose.

Sherrie Mueller, Tampa, Florida

Mueller is a guidance resource specialist at Plant City High School. "She has educated the owners of many local businesses of the positive influence they

can personally make in the lives of students through the scholarship program," writes one of her nominators, a local businessperson. "She has partnered with attorneys, doctors, banks, business owners, and many others to make them aware of the educational impact of providing scholarships."

Mueller has established relationships with businesses to bring mentors and scholarships to the school. She chairs the Fall Fancy event for the South Florida Baptist Hospital, where students volunteer to set up, host, and take down the event, giving them a valuable lesson in community service. In addition, Mueller serves on a variety of boards and committees in the community.

Leon Rollerson, Tulsa, Oklahoma

A teacher at the McLain High School for Science and Technology, Rollerson was nominated by members of the local business and not-for-profit community and the mayor of Tulsa. In preparing his students for life, Rollerson has connected the school to the larger community to make available classroom speakers and visits to local businesses. Students gain contact with the professional world and are better prepared to succeed after graduation. In addition, Rollerson serves as a role model for community involvement through his participation in the North Tulsa Community Coalition.

"Mr. Rollerson is a committed community activist with a passion for education and public service," writes Mayor Kathy Taylor in her nomination letter. "His dedication to this community has impacted the lives of hundreds of students, educators, and parents."

Elizabeth Davis, Washington, D.C.

Davis taught at John Philip Sousa Middle School for nearly thirteen years. "When she learned that Sousa Middle School played a major role in the desegregation of public schools in the District of Columbia,"

writes one of Davis's nominators, "she saw an opportunity to teach an important piece of the civil rights movement."

"Sousa was the subject of *Bolling v. Sharpe*," writes another nominator, "one of the five schools involved in the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision. She wanted her students to know about the *Bolling* and *Brown* cases and use them as a model for solving problems in their school and community."

Davis had her students research the cases and write letters to the board of education, city council, parents, and the principal of the school. She invited an adult who had attended the school at the time to

speak, and she guided her students in producing a presentation on the topic to the school. At one point, Davis and a student spoke at a senate forum. The school has since been designated as a National Historic Landmark.

Davis is now a technology education teacher at Charles Hart Middle School.

For more information on the MetLife Foundation Ambassadors in Education Awards, visit the National Civic League Web site (<http://www.ncl.org>).