



Golden Apple Award

Ms. Sara Reinert

September 10, 2012

Sara Reinert, math professor at the Kachemak Bay Branch of Kenai Peninsula College, first brought her passion for math to Homer Middle School more than eight years ago when she volunteered to run an extra-curricular Math Counts program for seventh and eighth grade advanced math students. Her exceptional rapport with middle school students and her willingness to adapt to the middle school's scheduling and space constraints allowed the program to flourish and grow, producing teams that have placed in the top three in regional and state competition. Her belief that exposing students, especially from isolated communities and schools, to a bigger math picture can profoundly affect their future has proven true for many of the students who participated in her Math Counts sessions and competitions.

In order to nurture the same passion for students on the Kenai Peninsula who couldn't afford to have the Math Counts experience, Sara worked to establish the Kenai Peninsula Middle School Math Meet, now in its eighth year. Approximately 90 students from area schools, including the district's Connections homeschool program, participate in a day of competition, based on the Math Counts program. Each year students, parents, teachers, and principals express deep gratitude for being able to participate in the KPBSD Math Meet. The exposure has opened new doors for many kids. For example, David Thomas, a Kenai Middle parent, attended the district math meet two years ago with his son, Drake, who was then a sixth grader. This experience inspired him to coach a Math Counts team at Kenai Middle. Additionally, since Homer Middle School does not include sixth graders, Sara volunteered to coach a small group of area sixth graders who competed in last year's KPBSD meet. A few of those students made it to the meet's final round and all can't wait to compete as seventh graders.

Sara not only teaches math skills in a variety of interesting ways, she mentors the quiet workers, the reluctant, and the kids with disabilities who love math. Math Counts and the KPBSD meet are truly labors of love for her. She has donated countless hours of her time, often paying her own expenses to Math Counts meets, and she diligently prepares and organizes materials and judges for the KPBSD meet each year. In addition, Sara has served on the Homer Middle School Site Council, and currently serves on the Homer High School Site Council.

One parent noted the following about the value Sara has given to so many students' lives: "Physical sports programs are great and teach many lessons but there is no limit to how fast motivated students can learn academic skills from a dedicated teacher, nor how far they can go. Sara instills an interest and love of math at a critical time in our students' lives and sets them up for success and enjoyment of high school, college, and STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) careers afterwards. Being from a small school in a small, remote town doesn't mean you can't compete at the highest levels and Sara enables our students to do just that."

Sara's work has made a profound difference not just for Homer area students, but for hundreds of peninsula math students who have used the Math Counts materials she prepares each year; for students who have attended the KPBSD math meet; and for students who became involved in the Math Counts meets. She is a consummate educator, community volunteer, and advocate for learning. Her volunteer work and vision has made a measureable difference in the achievement and enrichment opportunities for Kenai Peninsula Borough students.

The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District Board of Education is proud to recognize Ms. Sarah Reinert for her dedication to the students, parents, and staff in the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District.