

# Three named “Employee of the Year” at Centennial

## Juli Smith

Title 1 teacher at Centennial Elementary

*Commendations made at the Employee Recognition:*

Although she grew up next door and was a “Mustang” in high school, this outstanding educator made a mark in both Colorado and Texas before settling in Lino Lakes.

She earned her bachelor’s degree at Gustavus and followed that up with a Bethel masters.

She landed the perfect teaching position based on her passion for reading, using student data in her plans on a daily basis, and setting high expectations for student achievement.

Principal appraisals note how she sets the bar high for herself and is a role model for fellow staff on professionalism and hard work. To that end, she is generous with her time and knowledge and volunteers to assist colleagues and families whenever there is a need.

She invests significant time, beyond her contract, planning and providing instruction ensuring her young charges leave her care with improved reading skills.

She has worked all over the district during the past 11 years, including a stint as a substitute teacher, and currently calls Centennial Elementary home.

## Diane Joseph

Teacher of the deaf/hard of hearing

*Commendations made at the Employee Recognition:*

Passion for the job and enthusiasm are phrases used to describe this staff member. Appraisals say:

- Employee shows a high level of preparation;
- Her input is greatly valued by colleagues because of her competence;
- She is a diligent and dedicated teacher who is an advocate for all students.

Her emphasis has always been on curriculum and instruction, and instructional technology. She focuses on increasing reading and language abilities in her students, along with their self-esteem and motivation. This concern for individual students starts when they are babies and continues as they transition from graduation into the real world. She has the unenviable task of serving students of all ages at all schools.

Even though she grew up out west, she had family ties in Minnesota. Those ties proved too strong, thankfully, and after college she moved to Minnesota to seek fame and fortune. And this is where she earned her PhD in educational psychology.

Diane is celebrating her 33rd year of teaching, 23 in the Centennial School District, and her retirement all at the same time.

## Jacki Simonson

Special education paraprofessional at Blue Heron

*Commendations made at the Employee Recognition:*

This staff member grew up “Up North” graduating from the same high school as Judy Garland.

She earned a bachelor’s in health education at Bemidji State and eventually ended up in Centerville. She has worked as an emergency medical technician, bank teller and bank account representative, and has owned a home daycare.

Her supervisors say she is usually early for work, does whatever is asked, and is able to work with all staff and kids.

Centennial hired her 16 years ago to work in special education at Centerville Elementary, and later she moved to Blue Heron. Along with serving as a para, she also works for Kids Club, Centennial's school age child care program.

On employee appraisal forms she routinely scores a four in all categories – and four is the highest rating available.

Her ability to relate well to students is a strength, along with her wonderful attitude. She's positive, caring, reliable, flexible and dependable. Who could ask for more from an employee?