

## Meet Canton's 2007 "Teacher of the Year"

### Linda Caraher

On August 27<sup>th</sup>, at the Opening Day Convocation for all staff members, Andy Robbin, Principal of Cherry Brook Primary School, announced that one of his second grade teachers, Linda Caraher, had been selected as Canton's "Teacher of the Year." Linda received a standing ovation, and then motivated her colleagues by relating several classroom anecdotes with the charm and sincerity that have helped to make her a favorite among the Canton community.

"During my first year in education," Ms. Caraher told the crowd, "I was teaching a reading lesson when I noticed one of my first grade students not paying attention to the lesson. So I asked,

'Johnny, what are you doing?' He said, 'I'm tying my shoe.' I continued by asking, 'Johnny, which is more important – tying your shoe or learning how to read?' He looked up, paused for a long time, then in a groan replied, 'I don't know!'"

Linda then reminded her fellow educators, "It is a hard question to answer when you think about it. His mother was probably telling him at home to tie his shoe or he'd fall flat on his face and break his nose. The real question was, 'Learn to read, or break your nose?'"

Ms. Caraher said that she learned from Johnny, "The



Linda Caraher is congratulated by colleagues Lisa Sharrard (l) and Deb Tarnowicz (r). She encouraged teachers "to embrace change with the understanding that change is the only guarantee for a future for our children."



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secret to being an effective teacher is to get to know them in *their world*.”

Linda joined the Canton staff at Cherry Brook in 1999 as a Grade 2 teacher. She had begun her career 20 years earlier as a substitute teacher in Fulton County, Illinois, fresh from her undergraduate work at Western Illinois University, where she had earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Elementary Education. As she moved from Illinois to Wisconsin to Connecticut, and from grade to grade teaching computers (K – 6), kindergarten, first grade, second grade, and third grade, she also took advanced degree courses at Edgewood College in Wisconsin, the University of Wisconsin, Central Connecticut State University, and eventually earned her Masters Degree in Early Childhood Education from the University of Hartford.

Throughout her career, Ms. Caraher has enjoyed a wealth of experiences and rewards. She won the 1999 Wisconsin WEST Distinguished Teaching Award and was selected as one of 50 teachers nationwide to attend the American Wilderness Leadership School. She’s been a guest teacher at Wisconsin Science World and published two articles about teaching. She was even videotaped and featured in a ‘new techniques in education’ feature on television in Peoria, Illinois.

In her application for the “Connecticut Teacher of the Year,” Linda was asked what influenced her choice to become a teacher: “From the time I was four years old and playing with my classroom of dolls, I knew I wanted to be a teacher. My mother was a teacher and my father was a teacher, principal, and a superintendent. My favorite childhood memory was sitting at the supper table listening to my parents tell stories about the events of their classrooms. They always had a sparkle in their eyes as they spoke. I knew by listening to them that being a teacher would be rewarding.”

Recently, in addition to her curriculum development work and professional development leadership with the new Science standards, one of Linda’s significant contributions is the design of the “Window to the Night



“I have kept my promise to keep the light burning, to share my knowledge with colleagues, to promote science, and to help students be prepared to work in the 21st Century.”

Sky” program held at Cherry Brook Primary this past spring. Through Linda’s vision, grant writing efforts, and careful planning, over 200 second graders and their families had the opportunity to view Saturn (with all its rings), and the craters on the moon through high-powered telescopes. The momentum for the evening grew until it had the support and shared vision of many teachers from Cherry Brook and that of Marsha Jorgensen at the Canton Middle School. Children played with a planet parachute, simulated moon craters, learned songs, investigated *Google.earth*, and ventured out into the dark for a chance at star-gazing and the Orion telescopes. The evening was a stunning success.



“Nothing our children can do in the classroom has either the grandness of scope or the ability to capture their imaginations as effectively as a small community of students and parents, teachers, their principal, community members, and guest astronomers gathering to look into the night sky.”

At Convocation, Linda was given flowers and the coveted “Reserved Parking” sign which will mark off a parking space of her choice



for one year. Principal Andy Robbin noted that true to her spirit of community and teamwork, Linda asked for permission to share her parking space with her colleagues. As he closed his introduction, he summed up Linda Caraher’s contributions, saying, “There are countless other examples of how Linda exemplifies excellence. I could tell more stories about how she used a sand dollar to help a child increase his attendance, how she nicknamed a student “Einstein” to inspire him to do his best, or about ‘the great egg catcher lab experiment.’ and much more.

All of this knowledge, caring, and positivity is Linda Caraher... AND she comes with an adorable Midwestern accent too.”



Canton congratulates our 2007 - 2008  
Teacher of the Year, Linda Caraher.