

Photo: Lauren Knight

Coventry High School English teacher Tara Correia will get a chance to earn her Master's degree, thanks to the help of her colleague and 2012 Rhode Island Teacher of the Year Julie Lima-Boyle.

CHS teacher receives gift of education

An award-winning teacher bestows upon one of her colleagues chance to go farther

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Special to the Times

COVENTRY — A teacher at Coventry High School was speechless when she heard she would be getting—after 20 years of waiting—a free ride to earn her Master's degree.

Tara Correia, an English teacher, has been with the Coventry school district for nine years. She has four children, two grown and two young, and has been more focused on their needs rather than financing an expensive degree for herself.

Yet when fellow CHS teacher Julie Lima Boyle, the 2012 Rhode Island Teacher of the Year, was given an opportunity to give a scholarship to one

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CHS teacher's prayer heard

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deserving person, Correia's luck had changed.

"I was really surprised," she said. "Really, she just blew me away."

Boyle said that the decision was easy.

"There are many, many deserving students and colleagues that I would love to give this to, too. But Tara [Correia] just stood out as very deserving," she said, explaining how other teachers decided based on interviews or an application process, yet, "I just did it from the heart."

"We were encouraged to pick someone really deserving but maybe otherwise did not have the chance to get a degree... mainly being financial [reasons] that were holding them back from doing so," Boyle explained.

"It was her work ethic. She gives herself to everyone and inspires me that way," she continued. "Getting a master's was something she always wanted to do but she [kept] putting it on the back burner."

The Teach It Forward Scholarship program, sponsored by

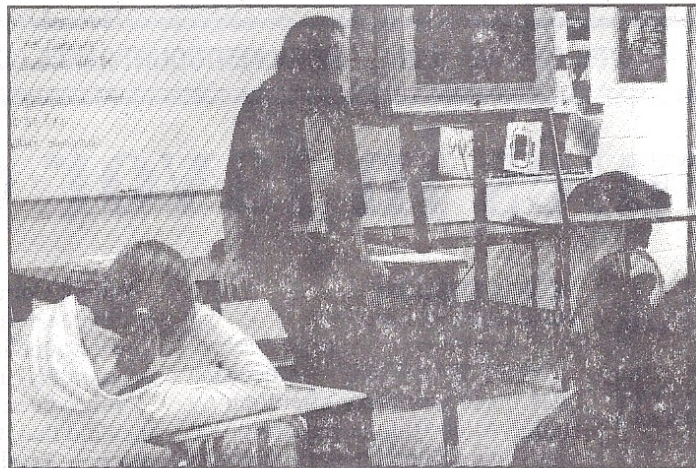


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Correia, teaching English last week, will pursue her Master's degree online at first through the University of Phoenix.

the University of Phoenix, gave the opportunity to every Teacher of the Year to select one deserving recipient.

For those who opt to, courses can be taken primarily online and for some practicum or observation hours, the University has campuses across the country. In Correia's case, there are two campuses in Massachusetts and one in Connecticut.

Correia explained that she plans to start off with one

course.

"For one course, it would be 20 hours per week and I won't attend the campus," she explained. "Since it's all from the comfort of my home I can still do the program while I'm employed."

Boyle explained how the online program is very "doable" for currently employed professionals.

"That's the exciting part," she said. "When I approached

her, she said it was a miracle, that someone heard her prayer. It was really sweet."

With the scholarship, Correia plans to earn her master's degree in administration and support. Combining online courses and three internships, the degree will prepare her to become a vice principal, principal or school administrator.

"It will really give me the background on all that goes into [it]," Correia said. "There will be a lot of coursework... a lot of hours learning hands on with budgets and data."

At the completion of her courses, she will be required to take an exam and obtain licensing for the field. She hopes the program will take her two years.

Correia can start her courses as early as May 23.

"I still have a long way to go. Leaving the classroom will be difficult," she said. "I really like working hands on with the kids and leaving them would be difficult."

"At the same time, I am always pushing myself to try something new, something different," she added.