

# “Teacher of the Year” finalist from Coventry

## Top three finalists will interview tonight



Lauren Knight/Daily Times

Julie Lima Boyle, a high school English teacher in Coventry, is one of three finalists vying for the “Teacher of the Year” award in Rhode Island.

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COVENTRY—When Julie Lima Boyle was selected as Coventry’s Teacher of the Year, she said she was completely “caught off guard.” Now, one month later, Boyle represents one of the top three finalists in the state.

Tonight, Boyle will give a 10-minute presentation and final interview with the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE). The finalists will also participate in a mock press conference.

When she was selected to represent the Coventry school district, Boyle had been led to believe that it was a different teacher. “I had no idea. I thought if it was a high school teacher, then it would be this person.”

Principal Michael Hobin had borrowed her teaching portfolio under the guise of his niece, a soon-to-be English teacher, according to Boyle. She did not suspect a thing, she said.

“He asked me if he could borrow it

as a sample of an English portfolio. He said he knew that I had a great one and I gave it to him thinking that it would help his niece,” said Boyle.

When asked about the leadership team’s nomination, Hobin told the Times that he “sort of tricked” Boyle in order to keep her potential nomination a secret.

“I was able to take her teaching portfolio to look over a number of letters that students have written her, about how she influenced them or had been an inspiration,” said Hobin.

Boyle was first awarded the “Teacher of the Year” for the high school and then, of the seven other nominees in the district, was selected to represent all of Coventry schools. On Aug. 25, at the end of the district-wide meeting with all Coventry teachers, the selection for both the high school and district were announced.

“And I finally realized it,” she said.

Boyle is a high school English teacher and has been working in Coventry for 13 years. She even grad-

uated from Coventry High School in 1990. Currently, Boyle teaches two English classes.

In Hobin’s letter of nomination, he noted her commitment to involvement, her philosophy on teaching, attention to public education issues and her improvement on the teaching profession, amongst other strengths. Hobin told the Times that Boyle has run a number of professional development workshops for the faculty and does “that masterfully.”

“She is just performing at a tremendous level,” he said. “And in addition, she is a phenomenal instructor.”

Hobin explained that in both her English classes, Boyle instructs students at a variety of academic levels and “does great with them.” She pushes her students to attain higher level thinking skills and works to prepare them for what is beyond high school, said Hobin.

Boyle also has been working to raise the school’s NECAP [New England

See **TEACHER**, Page A-2

# Teacher was surprised by nomination

*Continued from Page A-1*

Common Assessment Program] scores for reading and writing and has “done a great job of moving our English curriculum forward,” he said.

Boyle told the Times about her approach to the teaching profession. In her classroom, she likes to encourage energy high to keep students actively engaged in the material.

“I try to make things relevant. Some of the text seems so remote that I try to find a way to invoke a thoughtful response,” added Boyle, specifically referring to assignments on Shakespeare. “I find a way to take [the subject matter] to a level where they can relate.”

Boyle cited one particularly popular project she assigned during her classes’ study of Shakespeare.

“I said, create a Facebook page for Lady Macbeth,” she said. She asked the students to

creatively think about what Lady Macbeth would list on her wall, her likes or her favorites. Before she knew it, said Boyle, the students were responding on thoughtful character analysis, thematic focus and what they think motivated the characters.

Boyle said that the best thing a student could say at the end of the 84 minute period would be, “is class over already?”

Boyle also spoke about the letters that contributed towards her nomination. She opened up her teaching portfolio that was filled with thank you notes and letters from students whom she had an impact on. One particular letter was special.

The note was originally a card she had written to encourage a student who had been going through a tough time, said Boyle. Years later, the student heard that Boyle’s father had recently passed away.

“She sent it through her brother three years later. She

said she saved it as a reminder that people care and that she wanted to return the favor. It was so sweet,” said Boyle. In the note, the student said that it had been a comfort to her and she wanted to take the opportunity to encourage Boyle in return.

“Every time I look at it, I am comforted,” Boyle said.

According to spokesperson Elliot Krieger for RIDE, no teacher from Coventry has been awarded “Teacher of the Year” since at least 1989. Hobin said that the district is excited for Boyle.

“When I read her application that the state required, I was in awe of her writing, statement and philosophy she created,” said Hobin. “We are so thrilled.”

Boyle’s interview with RIDE will be tonight. She expects to be notified shortly after of the results.