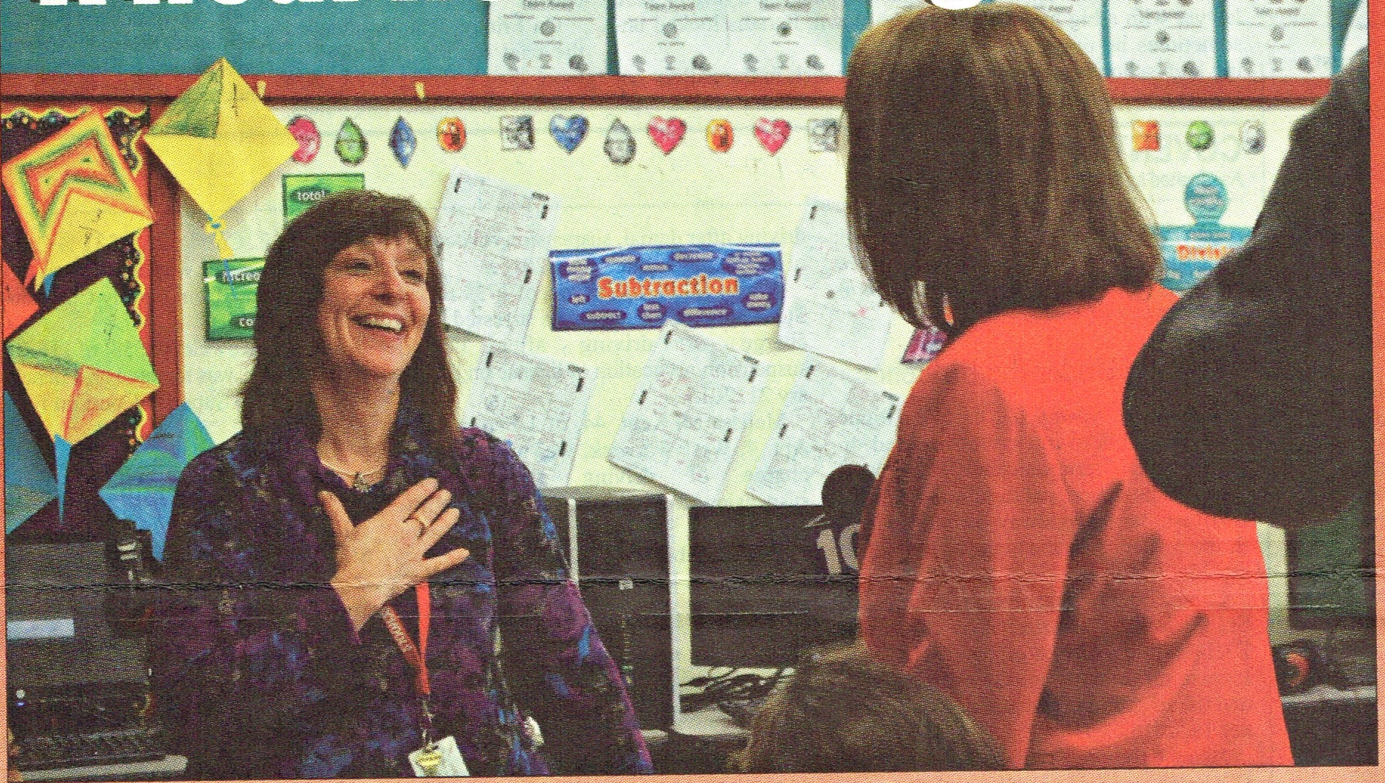


A Real Hemendinger



Kendra Leigh Miller • Daily Times

Hopkins Hill Elementary School art teacher Sara Hemendinger reacts as she is surprised with the announcement that she was being presented with WJAR-TV's Golden Apple Award Thursday by NBC's Patrice Wood.

Hopkins Hill art teacher receives Golden Apple

KENDRA LEIGH MILLER
kmiller@ricentral.com

COVENTRY —Hopkins Hill art teacher Sara Hemendinger couldn't have been more surprised when she was presented the Golden Apple Award Thursday morning as she was conducting class.

Hemendinger was nominated by a family friend, Louisa Timmins, who said in her letter the reason for her nomination is because Hemendinger not only teaches her regular stu-

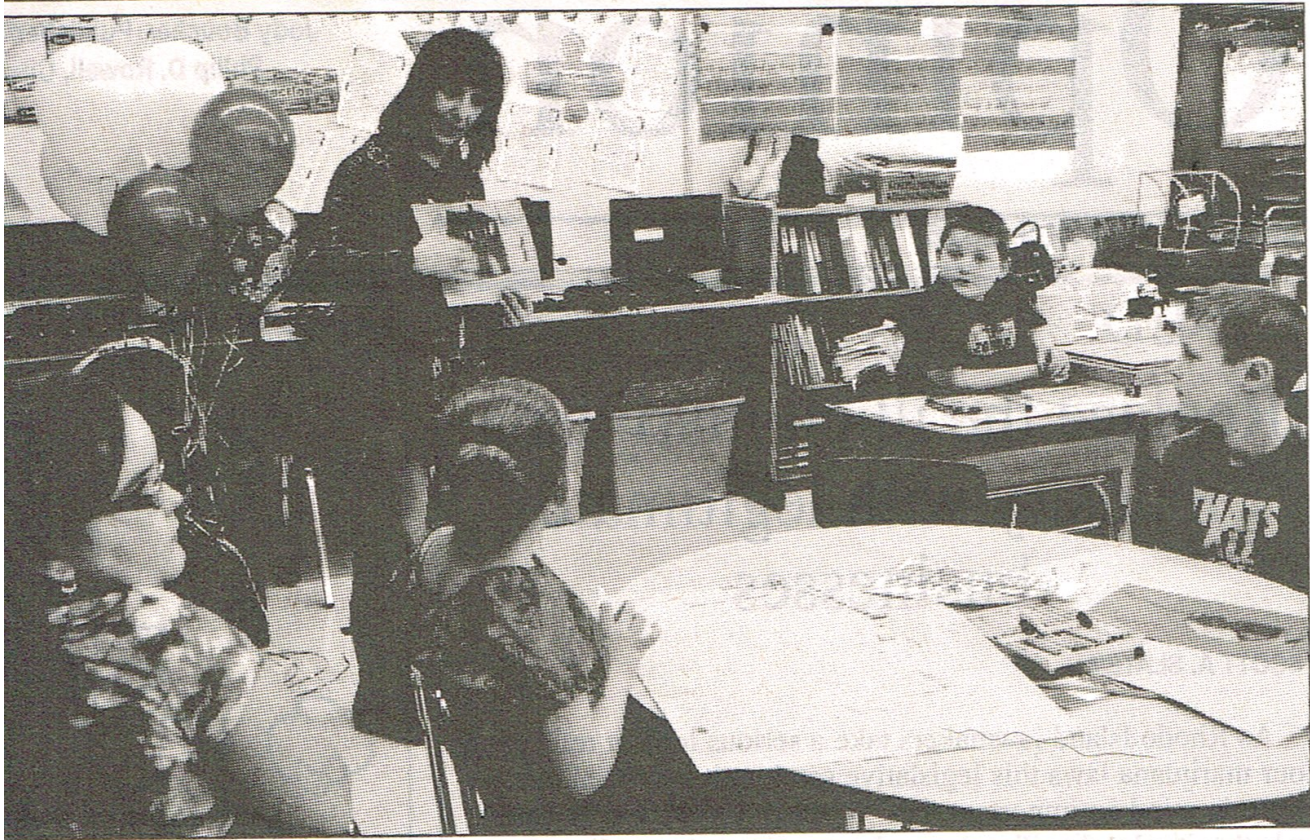
dents, she also takes the time to guide future teachers. Her son was taught by Sara as part of RIC's Masters of Fine Arts education program as a student teacher.

"My son went on at the Christmas table about how wonderful she made the experience for him with her guidance, patience and knowledge," Timmins said. "Even though my son is an adult, I am thankful to her. She has received teaching awards and written grants to help her students have the needed assistance in learning."

Timmins added that many don't understand the importance of arts in the public schools, however having that small amount of time and a good teacher have kept kids in school and she is one of the good ones.

"The only wisdom I can pass on is always be yourself and you never want to lose your sense of humor," Hemendinger said, who has been teaching for 20 years. "You enjoy your students and learning how to communicate

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Sara Hemendinger teaches an art lesson at Hopkins Hill Elementary School, where principal Kathy Tancrelle said she does all that she can to have all of her students do well.

Hemendinger inspires many at Hopkins Hill Elementary

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and appreciate them. One of my students came rushing into class this morning and said 'Oh, good, I'm not late for art.' That's a wonderful thing when a class means that much to them."

Two students, who carried the balloons and flowers for her, could hardly contain their excitement for her recognition.

Samantha Checko, in second grade, called Hemendinger "sweet."

"She teaches me how to draw really well," she said. "She's so impressive."

Her sister, Victoria, in fifth grade, said Hemendinger has always made herself available to her, even if she had a concern about something not art-related.

"I think of her as family," she said. "She never

favors anyone and treats everyone the same."

"She is one of the most student-centered teachers who does all she can to have her students do well," said Hopkins Hill Elementary School Principal Kathy Tancrelle. "She broadens that whole field for them and she's always willing to learn something new and integrating technology into art."

Tancrelle said the art she sees is so wonderful, in many cases there's no way to know if it was done by student or adult and other teachers have been known to sit in on her class and do what the students are doing.

"What an awesome thing to know you're not only affecting students here, but having such a positive effect on everyone around you," said Rhode Island Commissioner of Education Debra Gist, who presented the award along with WJAR-TV anchor Patrice Wood.