

Teachers of the year named

Anthony Ferro, Donald Jacques singled out for exceptional work

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COVENTRY — Becoming an award-winner forced him out of his usual comfort zone, according to one local teacher.

When his Wal-Mart Teacher of the Year award was announced in a faculty meeting this week, Anthony Ferro said, he was a little embarrassed.

A math teacher at Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School of Coventry, Ferro said he loves his students but prefers to “fly under the radar.”

Receiving a \$1,000 Wal-Mart grant and a teacher of the year award from the Coventry store isn’t exactly staying un-

dercover, in Ferro’s estimation.

Nationwide, each Wal-Mart store has an annual teacher of the year award to give out. Nominations are dropped off at the store. Recipients win a \$100 gift card to buy classroom supplies and a \$1,000 supplies grant for the entire school.

“It’s an honor for [Ferro], I’m sure,” said Principal Dr. Michael Almeida, “and I am pleased to see him nominated for this. He is an outstanding teacher here on his team; he volunteers his time with extracurricular activities at the school.”

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COVENTRY — When the Coventry School Department chose Donald Jacques as its District Teacher of the Year, it picked someone who always rises to the occasion, no matter what, according to Dr. Donna Raptakis, principal of Washington Oak Elementary School.

She nominated Jacques, Raptakis said, because his commitment to the job, to the students and to the school has set him above the rest.

“I nominated him because he was the lead teacher on the technology grant that

we received so that we could afford to buy all of the computers and other technology that we have,” Raptakis said. “He is always there to help students or faculty for that matter, when there are questions about technology or anything else.

“Mr. Jacques is one of those teachers who is here weeks before school starts getting his classroom ready for the kids,” she said. “The kids love him — he bonds great with the special needs kids because they can relate to him, the parents love him — he gets requested all the time, and he just constantly rises to the occasion, no matter what it is.”

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Ferro was nominated by an anonymous former student who wrote, "Mr. Ferro always did what he could to make math fun, he danced, taped angels on the floor and did extra research to help us learn ahead. He helped with study strategies and has been tutoring me for four years and has made my hate for math disappear. I now am on my way to becoming a math teacher."

He is dedicated to doing whatever it takes to help kids learn, Ferro said, even if building a rapport with them means singing, dancing and "making a fool of myself."

In a time when budgets are tight and schools are trying to set priorities, the award "couldn't come at a better time," Almeida said. "[The award] will be used for school supplies. I will be working with [Ferro] to identify our priorities; I definitely want his input since he's the reason we got this award."

In order to determine needs, Ferro said, he has been asking all the teachers in the building what their supplies needs are.

As a teacher on the Evolution team at the middle school, Ferro said, he sees the award as reflective of all the teachers in the building.

"They are the ones who inspire me," he said. "I love being a teacher; I love this building; I love the kids."