



2007-2008 Teachers of the Year



Deborah Meltvedt



Photo by Steve Yeater/Special to The Connection

Medicine runs in the family for this top teacher

By Antonio R. Harvey
Special to The Connection

Her father is a doctor. Her sister is a health care administrator. Three nieces are in college with plans to go to medical school. Maybe Deborah Meltvedt is right when she says that she was born to teach students about healthcare and medicine.

That medical legacy has translated into Meltvedt's success as a teacher at Arthur A. Benjamin Health Professions High School. For her efforts, she was recently named a Sacramento City Unified School District Teacher of the Year.

"...my dad is a doctor, my sister is in healthcare, and I have three nieces who are in pre-med right now. I've pretty much been around hospital a lot," Meltvedt said.

Before she began teaching full-time, Meltvedt worked as a health educator in the Central Valley, informing patients about general health and HIV.

During that time she often found herself invited to speak to students from elementary

to college.

That's when she decided that teaching healthcare was the thing to do.

"Instead of being a doctor (like other family members), I really liked educating people about healthcare. So that kind of naturally led me to the classroom," she said.

Meltvedt taught in the Elk Grove Unified School District for 15 years before moving on to Arthur A. Benjamin Health Professions High School.

The school, which opened in 2005, is a small high school that offers a rigorous career and college preparatory education using healthcare as a theme.

Meltvedt, who has a Bachelor of Science and Master's in Health Science, not only teaches a medical science course that combines anatomy and physiology, healthcare themes, and medical terminology, but she is also the advisor for the Health Occupation Students of America (HOSA) group at the school and coordinates job shadows, field trips, and community service in the health field for the students.

Continued on Next Page



Photo by Steve Yeater/Special to The Connection

Medical science teacher Deborah Meltvedt poses with one of her many classroom aids. Meltvedt was a health educator at clinics in Fresno and Merced before becoming a classroom teacher.

Daphne Cagle



Photo by Steve Yeater/Special to The Connection

Educator fits student needs with state standards

By Antonio R. Harvey
Special to The Connection

It takes a dedicated teacher to reach students with special needs. Sutter Middle School teacher Daphne Cagle is that kind of educator.

She was recently named a Sacramento City Unified School District Teacher of the Year for her unrivaled commitment to educate special education students at the school located on Alhambra and I Street.

Cagle said the honor is special, but she does her job to help students improve academically not to win awards.

"I just accept what I need to do," Cagle said while calmly sitting in Room 107 at Sutter. "My students need a lot of work. My job as a special ed teacher is kind of like fitting a round peg into a square hole. I'm trying to take kids with special learning needs and make them meet the grade-level standards. It's a challenging job, but you kind of do what you need to do."

Cagle was born prematurely which caused her to have vision problems. Cagle said her

family used to worry about the future, but that all changed when they received some encouraging words from her second-grade teacher.

"I had a teacher named Mrs. Toups in Houston, Texas, and she believed in me," Cagle said. "She thought I was really smart and told my parents that I was going to be successful. That made me want to help other kids. I wanted to be the kind of person that influenced people and changed people's self-esteem because she made my parents think that I could do it."

While in high school, Cagle worked at a school with kids who had learning disabilities as a volunteer. She went on to receive a Bachelor of Arts degree in speech pathology, and Master's in the same field from the University of Southwestern Louisiana, now call the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Thanks to a national convention, Cagle was recruited to come teach in California and has been here ever since.

"I didn't know anybody when came to

Continued on Next Page



Photo by Steve Yeater/Special to The Connection

Sutter Middle School teacher Daphne Cagle works with a student one-on-one. Cagle says that a teacher who raised her self-esteem in second grade inspired her career choice.

Cagle: Helping kids reach their goals

Continued from Previous Page

“Its exhausting work, but it is rewarding. I love it,” she said. “Everything is new here. We get to help create new things, and the kids are very enthusiastic.”

Currently, Health Professions High, located on McClatchy way has only freshmen and sophomores. But the idea, Meltvedt said, is to prepare students for the future.

“It’s very innovative,” she said of the school’s curriculum. “We have a lot regular subjects of course here, but there’s also a lot of integration among the disciplines. For example, I work with English and social science with health themes, and then we get the kids out in the community.

“It’s a new idea, but it’s taking off across the country,” Meltvedt continued. “We prepare them for college classes and/or workplace skills whether its resumé writing to giving presentations, or just being on time to work. (Overall) we prepare kids for college.”

Meltvedt also sits on the UC Davis Health System Community Advisory Board, which also helps her keep the students in tune with what the medical profession needs from employees.

Health Professions principal Matt Perry said Meltvedt is definitely a pioneer in helping the new school reach higher levels of success.

“Deborah Meltvedt has been with us since

the beginning... working 150 percent,” Perry said. “She built the 10th grade class from the ground up and has done an exceptional job coordinating workplace learning. We are extremely proud of her accomplishments. When you watch students in Deborah’s classes, they are interested, engaged and participating. The students appreciate how prepared she is and how active and organized the learning environment feels on a daily basis.”

And the students at Health Professions—well, they just love “Ms. Meltvedt.”

They say she has their best interests at heart.

“Ms. Meltvedt is really a sweet, nice teacher and she’s really involved in student events,” Sophomore Lisa Teixeira said. “Students go to her to talk about every medical question under the sun. I’m really glad she was recognized for the award. Ms. Meltvedt has always who struck me as a person who is really deserving of all awards. It’s great going to her class and being around her.”

Meltvedt said she was caught of guard when she heard she was named Teacher of the Year, but she is appreciative of the award.

“I was very flattered and honored, but also surprised because I know how many good teachers there are in this district,” she said. “But I’m very pleased and very excited about it. (The award) make you reflect on your teaching style and goals.”

Meltvedt: Students appreciate her work

Continued from Previous Page

California,” she said. “I just wanted the opportunity.”

Cagle has worked in the district for 27 years. Nineteen years ago, Cagle started at Sutter Middle School as a speech therapist working with students with speech and language problems for two days a week and has been teaching communicative disabled students for the last eight years.

“They are really smart students that have normal intelligence, but are delayed in comprehending language,” she said. “They really are smart kids but they need a special way of learning.”

Cagle also teaches reading, language arts, history, math, world and American history to Special Ed students and a few “regular ed” students as well.

Cagle said she prepares students for high school and beyond.

“One of my major goals is to get students to pass the high school exit exam. You go to school for all these years and then graduate with a piece of paper saying I showed up everyday,” Cagle said.

“But the main thing is to make sure my kids have the academic skills. A lot of kids who come into my class cannot read that well, but might be pretty good in math. So

they have some pretty low skills that I have to solve and work to bring their skills up to grade level.”

That work has paid off. A lot of her former students have passed the exit exam, she said.

Eighth grade student Anthony Washington likes being in Cagle’s class.

“She’s a good teacher, nice, and a lot of fun,” Washington. “She gives parties, and takes us on field trips, too.”

Cagle said she is very excited that she was nominated for an award she didn’t think expanded in her direction.

“When I first got nominated for Teacher of the Year I didn’t know that a Special Education teacher could win,” Cagle said. “But as I went through the process I realized that I work with challenging kids. And if you can be successful with challenging kids—well, that’s important. So yes, I’m kind of blown away about this whole process and this recognition.”

While Cagle may be a bit surprised, her principal, Greg Purcell, said the award is well-deserved.

“She one of the hardest working teachers I’ve ever been around,” Purcell said. “She’s totally about student achievement and making sure kids reach their goals. She’s genuine, sincere, and committed to her profession.”