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The University of Montana

NEWS RELEASE

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Feb. 13, 1995

KALISPELL EDUCATOR WINS UM TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARD

MISSOULA --

Toni Gunnerson, a Kalispell second-grade teacher, received the fourth annual Maryfrances Shreeve Award for Teaching Excellence during a University of Montana - Missoula dinner honoring Montana educators.

Gunnerson, who teaches at Elrod Elementary School, accepted the \$2,000 award from Maryfrances Shreeve during the Feb. 4 Teacher Education Reception. About 400 teachers, counselors and administrators from throughout Montana gathered for the dinner, which is held each year to thank educators who supervise UM student teachers, practicum students and interns.

The award was established in 1992 to honor Shreeve, a master elementary teacher who taught for 37 years in Montana. Shreeve, who lives in Missoula, earned master's and bachelor's degrees in education at UM.

The award winner must have taught elementary school in Montana for at least 10 years -- with most of those years in western Montana -- and must be creative, seek professional growth and devote extra time to helping students achieve their potential.

"Toni has earned my respect because her students come first," fellow Elrod Elementary teacher Marlene Allen wrote in a letter nominating Gunnerson for the honor. "No concern is too great or too small if it will benefit her student's growth. I have seen her available to brush a student's hair in the morning because her mother worked an early shift and was unable to do so.

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"She started an after school reading program last year for struggling readers because there was not enough time in her day to give each child the attention she felt they deserved," Allen wrote. "The quality I treasure the most about Toni Gunnerson is she doesn't do anything ... for the praise or glory. She does it because Toni is a teacher and she loves what she does."

Gunnerson earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education and a master's in reading and history from Central Washington University in Ellensburg. She designed, developed and implemented the Prefirst program in Kalispell's School District No. 5 in 1984. The highly successful program helps children who are not developmentally ready for first grade. In 1988, she received the Christa McAuliffe Grant.

She is currently working with two other teachers to train Chapter I tutors and teachers a new and innovative approach to teaching first-graders to read. As an author for Kendall Hunt Publishers, she has written the Kindergarten Teacher's Implementation Guide for Pegasus and Big Books for Kindergarten.

This year's runners-up for the Maryfrances Shreeve Award are Mark Latrielle, a middle school science and history teacher from Clinton Elementary School District No. 32, and Jean Clouse, a fifth-grade teacher from Missoula's Target Range District No. 23.

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JM/kr

Missoulain, Kalispell media / pic

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