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Media Alert

Educators in Central Florida Honored with Excellence Awards Coincides with National Catholic Schools Week January 29-February 5

On January 27, just before the kick-off to Catholic Schools Week, the Diocese of Orlando's Office of Catholic Schools held its third annual 21st Century Catholic Schools Excellence Awards ceremony. The awards were presented by Superintendent of Catholic Schools Henry Fortier and Bishop John Noonan.

Out of 127 nominations, 9 individuals received awards: three elementary school teachers, three high school teachers and three administrators with one overall winner in each category. The three overall winners each received a \$1,000 cash prize.

All of the finalists and winners in the teaching categories were recognized for excellence in promoting their school's Catholic identity, use of technology skills, individual teaching philosophy and professional development.

Top administrators were acknowledged for modeling their faith through the school's Catholic identity, encouraging collaborative leadership, developing and maintaining curriculum, instruction and assessment programs, and level of personalization.

As part of their award, all of the finalists and winners were given tickets to the Orlando Magic/Indiana Pacers basketball game on January 29, where they were recognized on the court of the Amway Center by Fortier during a halftime presentation.

"As the Bishop of Orlando I would like to thank all our teachers, both elementary and high school, and what a great gift they are to the diocese, and especially to our students, and in turn I pray that our students become a gift to our nation, not only in what they do but what they give back to our country," said Bishop John Noonan.

The event was also an opportunity to unveil the new Blessed Mother Teresa Award, which will recognize schools for their works of corporal mercy and service to the community. The first winning elementary and high school will be announced this spring.

"With the inception of the Blessed Mother Teresa award moving forward, we wanted to make sure that we recognized the schools that were doing an exceptional job, even if it was 'small

things with great love' as Mother Teresa always said," said Fortier, who noted that the award was yet another example of the schools' Catholic identity.

The winners and finalists for the third annual 21st Century Catholic Schools Teacher of the Year Award are as follows:

High School Teacher of the Year

WINNER: Marie Gallo-Lethcoe, theology teacher, Father Lopez Catholic High School, Daytona Beach

FINALIST: Cassidy Gleaton, band director, Trinity Catholic High School, Ocala

FINALIST: Rita Herschbach, English teacher, Central Catholic High School, Melbourne

Elementary School Teacher of the Year

WINNER: Deena Porter, middle school teacher, St. Joseph Catholic Academy, Lakeland

FINALIST: Anne Lyden, school counselor, St. Mary Magdalen Catholic School, Altamonte Springs

FINALIST: Janet McCauley, kindergarten teacher, Holy Name of Jesus Catholic School, Indialantic

Administrator of the Year

WINNER: Doug Workman, principal, Ascension Catholic School, Melbourne

FINALIST: Deborah Schwope, principal, St. Joseph Catholic School, Winter Haven

FINALIST: Yvonne Toro, principal, Basilica School of St. Paul, Daytona Beach