

News Release

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RODEO INSTITUTE FOR TEACHER EXCELLENCE TO PRESENT RITE TEACHER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

HOUSTON, Tex. – The Rodeo Institute for Teacher Excellence (RITE™) will host its third annual RITE Teacher of the Year Luncheon at the Downtown Aquarium on Wednesday, May 9, 2007, where the two recipients of the 2007 RITE-Mary Jane Hamilton Teacher of the Year Award will be announced.

As RITE celebrates its tenth year of operation, this year's luncheon will focus on the accomplishments of its honored guests and also the tremendous strides that RITE has done for educational reform in the past decade. Madeline Lunde, Executive Director states, "The RITE Teacher of the Year Luncheon is such a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the success of outstanding teachers with children who are no longer "at-risk" Because of their hard work, children have been empowered with the gift of literacy and are therefore readers and destined to be our future leaders."

Launched in 2005, the RITE Mary Jane Hamilton Teacher of the Year Award honors the memory of longtime educator Mary Jane Hamilton who lost her battle with cancer in 2003. Ms. Hamilton taught at Bastian Elementary and Longfellow Elementary in the Houston Independent School District for 17 years before becoming the Executive Director for PSH Foundation. Additionally, Ms. Hamilton was a lifetime member of the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo, past chairman of the Steer Auction Committee as well as a charter member of the Houston Cosmopolitan Club.

Once again, RITE will select two teachers from participating schools to receive this prestigious award, one from elementary grades and another from the intermediate level

Ann Starks, 2006 Teacher of the Year (Intermediate) said "The students that I teach have reached and continue to exceed all of our expectations at Escamilla. My children love this program, which is reflective in their outstanding performances. Teaching RITE students is a pure joy." Fellow recipient Cathy Bibbs-Jackson, also a 2006 Teacher of the Year (Elementary) echoes that sentiment by stating, "I find the greatest joy in the reading success of all of my students. It has been an honor and privilege to serve as RITE Teacher of the Year."

Selecting the most deserving of the RITE Mary Jane Hamilton Teacher of the Year nominees is always a difficult process according to Lunde. Each year, RITE contracts with an external expert to assume judging responsibilities so that the selection can be fair and impartial. To select this year's recipients, RITE has hired Ms. Deborah Jackson, nationally renowned reading consultant to do the honors.

In all, 37 participating RITE schools will be represented, with the nominating principals and their

respective nominees in attendance. The event will feature special keynote speaker, Nancy Baird, M.Ed., LCDC whose background with helping at-risk children has earned her a reputation as an unforgettable motivational speaker. Recognized both regionally and nationally, Baird dynamic style and persona have dazzled audiences across the nation. Her presentations have been enjoyed by such groups as Methodist Hospital, ConocoPhillips, DePelchin Children's Center, Child Advocates and the United Way of the Texas Gulf Coast. Houston's Jerome Gray, Senior News Editor/Anchor from KPRC will serve the event as master of ceremonies.

About RITE

The Rodeo Institute for Teacher Excellence (RITE) is a non-profit organization that believes at-risk children must learn to read on grade-level by third grade in order to succeed in school and later life. Research has shown that reading is the key to academic achievement and that early intervention is the single most important factor in preventing illiteracy. Children who are not able to read on grade level by third grade have a history of being the most "at-risk" for failure and dropping out of school well before graduation.

As RITE wraps up its tenth year of operation, its mission continues to be to train, mentor and support early childhood education through sixth grade teachers in the methodologies of reading instruction to give them the skills they need to be highly qualified to teach at-risk students to read and succeed. The RITE program can be found in over 460 classrooms in 39 early childhood centers, elementary, and intermediate schools in the Houston, Aldine, Spring and Kandleton Independent School Districts. This year RITE will work with approximately 11,000 children, bringing the total number of students served to over 40,000.

For more information on the RITE Teacher of the Year Award Luncheon or on the RITE program, please contact Lynn Zeid, Director of Development at 713-532-3822.

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