

Teacher of the Year ♦ Vicki Hillsman



Over the last 25 years, Vicki Hillsman, El Dorado Spring's Marketing Educator and DECA Advisor, has left her mark on the heart of her community and the lives of her students.

Her marketing program's motto is "DWYSYWDWYSYWDI" ... "Do What You Say You Will Do When You Say You Will Do It." Vicki's students have taken it to heart with each creative project they've tackled. The school store, "The Doghouse," went from an operation selling cookies and milk from a table to a full store grossing over \$40,000. Her students have assisted a community revitalization project by gaining a \$400,000 grant. Her DECA students have qualified for National and International competitions. As a result of all her efforts, many of her students have graduated from college with marketing and management majors, at least a dozen have become entrepreneurs, and six have gone on to become teachers in the El Dorado Springs school district.

Vicki also believes in giving back to her industry, having been an active member of ACTE, Missouri ACTE, MCEA, DECA, MSTTA, and CTA from 1983 to present. She has held numerous offices and served on many committees during this same period. We simply don't have enough room to list all her accomplishments, not to mention those of her students! So, we will let some of her colleagues share a few of her exceptional talents.

David Hedrick, High School Principal:

Mrs. Hillsman's professional commitment has been extremely impressive. She has taken a leadership role in the local and state level. She averages 65 to 70 students in her curriculum each year and over 20% of the students in the upper three classes are DECA members. Three out of the last four years, she has had 30 students qualify for international competition with last year's group finishing in the top 10. She has served on numerous committees but probably most important is [her] willingness to work with other departments and fellow teachers. Vicki has an impressive resume and numerous accomplishments, but what sets her apart is her care and concern for her students and her expectation of them. The end result of this is the success of our students way beyond competition. They have taken the skills they have been given into our community and beyond.

Melissa Faucett, District 10 DECA Competitive Events Director:

Vicki has served on the DECA Board, the MCEA Board, and has held the position of District Advisor within our DECA District 10 for the past 15 years. All these leadership positions testify to the confidence that has been placed in her capable trust – time and time again. Vicki has also served as a Mentor at least six years within our MCEA Division. She is able to guide new instructors as they begin careers as marketing instructors and DECA Advisors within our DECA student organization.

Roger Barnes, Superintendent:

Recently, Mrs. Hillsman's students combined efforts with a community group. Spring City Revitalization Group (SCRG) to research, develop, and market the city of El Dorado Springs in an effort to revitalize the downtown area, bringing back commerce and trade to the once thriving area. This recent venture is clear evidence of her student-centered, community involvement. Mrs. Hillsman has an excellent rapport with the students, faculty, administration, and community business employers and leaders. ... Mrs. Vicki Hillsman is an asset to our students, school district, and our community.



Rhonda Culbertson, parent:

Mrs. Hillsman's knowledge, zest and energy are abundant as she guides her students in the direction of success. Her ability to see her students' potential and lead, teach and encourage them is truly a remarkable gift. The results of her efforts bring district and state winners year after year and most recently, top ten international winners.

Debra Vickers, colleague:

Vicki's students learn marketing principles in class and have many opportunities to apply these techniques through real-life experiences. They serve on community boards, work in their student-operated school store, and are sought-after employees by businesses in the community. The marketing program here is extremely positive and highly regarded by members of the school and community alike.

Whitney Brower, student:

It is a rarity to create a class that every student anticipates with such enthusiasm, but in Mrs. Hillsman's classroom that is the case. From personal experience, on a daily basis I looked forward to going to Mrs. Hillsman's class, and I am confident in saying that every student who has been privileged to be in her classroom feels this same way. This is not typical of the average high school teacher. Her ability to make students feel equal, eagerness to help, and understanding in every situation are just a few of the many reasons why students look forward to walking into her classroom. I haven't even mentioned her excitement! By creating such an environment with these rare qualities, students are surrounded with optimism and positive reinforcement on a daily basis. Recommending Mrs. Hillsman for ACTE Teacher of the Year is a great honor to me. She has not only taught me skills required in the classroom, but also life lessons I won't ever forget. Every minute in her classroom was inspiring and a great experience; therefore, I feel that Mrs. Hillsman far surpasses the expectations to be awarded this honor.

For all these reasons and more, Missouri ACTE is proud to recognize Vicki Hillsman as the 2008 Teacher of the Year.



Outstanding Career and Technical Educator ♦ Charlotte Stiens



Charlotte Stiens has been a long time supporter and advocate of career and technical education. Her divisional roots are in family and consumer sciences, but her energies have

been expended to students of several career and technical student organizations, adult programs, and teacher education as well as a plethora of professional development endeavors. She is a believer in the philosophies of career and technical education because of the benefits and applications for students in their daily lives.

She is currently employed as a family and consumer sciences teacher educator at her alma mater, Northwest Missouri State University. She is working to complete a doctoral degree and resigned from teaching junior high and high school family and consumer sciences in the public school system this past school year to complete the degree requirements.

Her 31 years teaching family and consumer sciences in the public school grounds her practical approach perspective to teaching at the university level. She is always plotting a way for teacher education students to be able to interact with area teachers in order to expand their professional network and practical experiences.

As she attends meetings, conferences, and workshops that share classroom ideas and resources, she is always carrying the multitudes of leftover copies back to her students. Additionally, she requires that teacher education students participate in the career and technical student organization competitive events as evaluators in order to experience face to face contact with junior high and high school students, network with family and consumer sciences professionals and parents, and learn about the myriad of possibilities for chapter program of work activities and community service opportunities. She strongly encourages her students to become active in the related professional organizations.

Charlotte works with teacher education students much like she did with middle school, junior high, and high school – capitalizing on their potential and providing opportunities for them to take positive risks to develop their leadership, public speaking, and employment skills. As a result, she has proudly served as the advisor to active Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) chapters. Highlights of her advising years include serving as advisor to two consecutive State Presidents, the National President, two State First Vice-Presidents, and a National Officer Candidate.

In 1990-91, she had three students who served as the Regional, State and National President all in the same year. As far as we know, Presidents at all three levels from the same school has never happened before or since. She has also received the FCCLA Master Advisor, Advisor Mentor, and Spirit of Advising awards.

Charlotte has been active all levels of FCCLA. She has assisted with STAR Events (FCCLA competitive events) in all capacities at the regional and state levels and for four years as an event lead consultant at the national level. She has attended nineteen National Leadership Meetings and at least ten national Cluster Meetings. She has never missed a State Leadership Conference and attended several Access Conferences. Charlotte is always willing to help out with whatever is needed and has served as a meeting facilitator or presenter many times. She was a charter member of Missouri FCCLA Alumni and Associates and served as an officer of that group for several years.

Even though much of Charlotte's energies has been devoted to family and consumer sciences and FCCLA, Charlotte has been active in other career and technical organizations, as well. She has spent countless hours assisting students with speeches and projects for their competitive events and quests for leadership positions and awards for the National FFA Organization and Future Business Leaders of America. She holds an Honorary Chapter FFA Degree from the South Nodaway FFA Chapter, an honor she cherishes since her father also holds an Honorary Chapter Degree. She has also served as an evaluator for SkillsUSA events.

According to one of her colleagues, "She is a consistent innovator and has exhibited her ability to be a life-long learner for the betterment of her chosen profession. She is very student focused and strives to prepare our future teachers to be effective beginning teachers, who have a thorough understanding of the importance of their role as a classroom teacher in Family and Consumer Sciences."

One of her students pays her one of the highest compliments when she says, "I have known Charlotte for just over five years now and can honestly say that there is no single person who has had a larger affect on my career and personal life."

Missouri ACTE is proud to recognize Charlotte Stiens as the 2008 Outstanding Career and Technical Educator.



Outstanding Teacher in Community Service ♦ Renee Meents



“To teach a child to count is important. To teach a child what counts is essential.” This motto not only represents Renee Meents’ philosophy, but it has guided the students who have passed through her Family and Consumer Sciences classroom over the years. Renee has instilled in her students the importance of “giving back, “ as well as the basic truth that one person, in fact, can make a difference.

Over the years, Renee and her students have performed a number of projects for their local community, including but not limited to: organizing 11 blood drives in the past five years, holding baby showers for newborns in need, hosting a number of food and clothing drives, serving as craft-making elves at breakfast with Mr. & Mrs. Claus, establishing a Career Day for local students and businesses, developing a “Friends of Rachel” welcoming committee for new students, reading to children at the local library and Head Start programs, hosting a children’s book drive, raising money for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, producing traffic safety docudramas, conducting trash pickups, providing Veteran’s Day PowerPoint presentations and speakers on substance and alcohol abuse prevention, mentoring middle school girls, as well as holding monthly character lessons at the elementary school.

The major project of this school year has been “Embrace L.I.F.E.,” a suicide awareness project. In October, FCCLA (Family Career and Community Leaders of America) members participated in Chapters in Action training at the Missouri ACCESS FCCLA Conference. Upon returning from the conference, the members decided on a “STOP the Violence” project, focusing on suicide prevention. The initial goal was to train all chapter members in the recognition of the warning signs of suicide by having crisis counselors conduct QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) training in January. Two weeks before the scheduled training, a recent graduate committed suicide. This incident caused the students to expand the focus of their project to try to educate as many people as possible about the warning signs of depression and suicide and the importance of reaching out for help.

Signs with the suicide prevention hotline number were placed in each classroom. Members held peer education workshops with all students in grades 7-12. High school students were given the opportunity to participate in a depression screening conducted by the Ozark Center in Joplin. Those participating

received “Out of the Darkness” t-shirts provided by the chapter. Included in the mid-term grade report for students in grades 7-12 was a depression and suicide information sheet developed by students. With the financial assistance of area businesses, the chapter gave each student a t-shirt with the project theme and the suicide hotline number printed on it.

Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) students researched the effect of diet and exercise on stress and depression and designed positive posters to promote good mental health habits. They also prepared posters emphasizing suicide warning signs and promoting the importance of reaching out to others. FCS students were featured on a TV news segment entitled, “The Silence That Kills.”

This community project, more than any other, helped students to realize that what they say and do truly matters. The participating students realize now that they can make a difference in their school and community.

As one of her colleagues put it, *“It takes hard work and dedication to produce student leaders. Renee inspires her students to be leaders and has been a role model for them in the leadership positions she has held in our state.”* Another colleague echoed that sentiment when she wrote, *“Renee defines the optimism, dedication, and inspiration that a teacher must have to help her students reach their optimum education and personal goals.”*

One of her former students says, *“... she helped me develop the skills that now serve me in my current profession and also qualities to help me be a better person. One of the biggest things she shared with me was how important it is to do things that you may not think will make a huge difference. She taught me not to think, ‘Why should I do that? That won’t help anyone’ and to realize that even the smallest acts can have a huge impact on those around me. She taught me that you don’t have to move mountains to help people.”*

As Margaret Mead once said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” In this case, it has been one person, Renee, who has served as the seed of change in her community.

Missouri ACTE is proud to recognize Renee Meents as the 2008 Outstanding Teacher in Community Service.



Outstanding New Career and Technical Teacher ♦ Deanna Thies



Deanna Thies has jumped into teaching with both feet! She currently teaches Agriculture education at both the middle school and high school level in Booneville, MO. In

addition, she is a Future Farmers of America (FFA) Advisor.

According to the Director of the Booneslick Technical Education Center, *“Deanna is in the unique position of dividing her time between high school agriculture education students and middle school students who have her as part of an exploratory program. While some would find such a teaching load to be less than desirable, Deanna has done a wonderful job of engaging her middle school students in a manner that results in many choosing to enroll in agriculture courses in high school. The connection Deanna has established with these younger students is one of the strongest recruiting tools any agriculture education program could have.”*

Her fellow Booneville FFA Advisor points out, *“Deanna’s greatest strength is that she strives for success for every*

student, whether it be proficiency awards, state and national degrees, career development events, or simply helping a student establish an SAE, Deanna wants to make sure that every student succeeds at

something. Deanna has also been instrumental in the success of our FFA Chapter, which is being reorganized for the second time as a Top 30 Chapter in the State of Missouri. Even though all the awards are nice, Deanna has kept in perspective that it doesn’t take a plaque or pin to be successful, and stresses to her students that hard work and perseverance can be its own reward.”

Deanna is obviously a “natural born teacher.” With such a great start to her career, we are confident that her future holds many more successful students, grateful faculty and prestigious awards. We are happy to be able to recognize Deanna as the 2008 Missouri ACTE Outstanding New Career and Technical Teacher and eagerly await her future accomplishments!