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## The Best in the Nation!

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# The best *A+* in the nation!

Cathy Carnahan's role as teacher began at the tender age of 10.

The oldest of seven children, she organized summer school for her siblings, created worksheets and spelling tests and prepared report cards for each of them. She even had a little bell on her desk and rang it when they could go to recess.

"They actually came back in at the end of recess, which I think is pretty remarkable," Carnahan '73 says with a laugh.

After 27 years of teaching, she traded her classroom for an administrative post and now is shaping the education of 700 middle schoolers.

For her dedication, passion and vision as principal of Duniway Middle School in McMinnville, she was named national middle school principal of the year.

The award is presented annually by the National Association of Secondary School Principals and MetLife, which gave her a \$5,000 grant for professional development or school improvements.

## Loves middle schoolers

Carnahan found her niche teaching middle school, where students can be challenging, but are also at an age where teachers and administrators can affect where they go in life.

"They are at such a crossroads," she said. "They are formulating who they are and what they stand for. If we can help them tap into their potential and help them dedicate themselves to learning, then we are setting them up to be successful in high school."

Carnahan wasn't looking for a change when she agreed to serve as interim assistant principal at Duniway, but discovered that she really enjoyed it.

"It made me realize what an important role an administrator serves," she added. Four years later, when the principal position opened, she applied and was hired.

Carnahan is known for the collaborative environment she has created at Duniway. With a day that starts about 7:30 and goes until about 6 – or later – she sees every

student every day, either in the lunchroom, before or after school, or in the classrooms, which she visits regularly. Her emotions welled to the surface as she talked about the teachers, the education assistants, the secretaries – everyone in the school who contributes to the education of the students.

"When you collaborate at a building level, you can see that every adult in the building is impacting the kids," she said. "I get to see the impact others make. The connection really occurs in the classroom with the teachers and I get to witness what they are doing with the kids."

Teachers at Duniway rave about Carnahan, calling her a driven and passionate principal who believes in team work, trusts the teachers and values their achievements. She is constantly sharing information from conferences and workshops and asks Duniway teachers to share strategies that are successful in the classroom with their colleagues.

"She's brought this amazing quilt of people to Duniway," said teacher Jamie Mendoza-Teem. "She's very student centered and solution based. She teaches us to be good readers of a child. We really take a look at each individual child and make sure we're doing all we can for them. She personifies that."

Carnahan is not the type of principal who remains in her office, said language arts teacher Ryan Chambers '04. She checks in with teachers and students daily and is around students constantly.

"She stands by the front door every day after school and says goodbye," he said. "Each kid gets that from her. What makes her a great principal is that she has been in the classroom and knows what is required of a teacher. She knows all the little things that can happen during the day. The staff and students are her priority."

Carnahan said the award reflects on



everyone at Duniway – the teachers and staff as well as the students. “I could be a strong leader, but if I didn’t have strong individuals in the school, then we couldn’t accomplish what we do,” she said. “I believe in every staff member, every staff member believes in me, and we all believe in our students.”

Carnahan was married when she came to Linfield with her husband, Scott '73, now Linfield’s athletic director. Her experience as a student was much different from most other students at the time. Still, she said she was challenged and learned to think deeply about the subjects she was studying.

“The Linfield experience, fortunately for me, continued when we came back 10 years later and Scott took on his role at Linfield,” she said. “I’ve had the Linfield experience for most of my life, including as a parent (Chris '00 and Carrie '02).”

– *Mardi Mileham*

### *Advice to parents about middle schoolers*

- Get involved with the school.
- Stay involved, even when your children say they don’t want you involved.
- Keep communication open so they know they can talk to you, even if you don’t like what you are hearing. You can’t help them if you don’t know what they are feeling or worried about.
- Hold them accountable. Don’t assume their homework is right and everything is fine with their friends.
- Know their friends and know their friends’ families.

*Maryalice Russell, left, superintendent of the McMinnville School District, surprised Cathy Carnahan '73 in announcing that she was named national middle school principal of the year to a packed house of students, faculty, district, state and national officials and a large contingent of Carnahan’s family. The award was presented at a gala in Washington, D.C., in early October where Carnahan met with congressional delegations, education department officials and other state recipients.*

