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Outstanding Educator Mary Adams

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has helped them grow on and off the field."

Moore: Outstanding Educator Mary Adams

Ms. Johnson feels that personal growth is an important goal in organized sports. "The biggest lesson I learned playing soccer happened during a game I was playing goalie," she said. "The other team scored a crucial goal because my defense was not communicating. I was furious. My attitude dropped, and I wanted to quit. My dad pulled me to the sideline as the game was going on and told me that my attitude affected everyone else's attitude around me. My mood would either enhance their performance or bring them down. I have taken that advice and have used it with my own team. I take it into my classroom too."

Fall of 2005, in addition to the soccer-coaching job, Ms. Johnson was offered a part-time position at KHS teaching At-Risk students. Principal Fine said, "She looked forward to this opportunity to make a connection and a difference with the students that struggled academically."

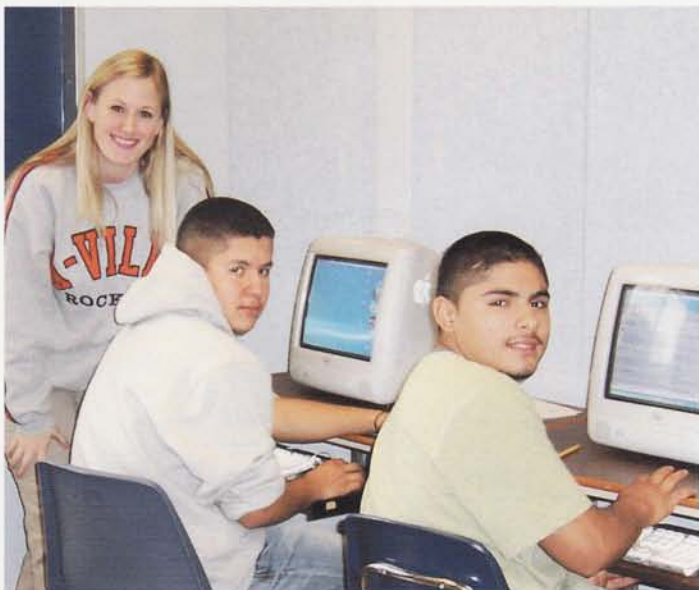
With Michigan's high-quality teacher-education programs and surplus of teaching talent, the state has become a prime recruiting location for other states where teaching opportunities are plentiful. Spring of 2005, recruiters from Baltimore, Maryland, had offered Ms. Johnson a teaching position in their school district. "I considered the Maryland job," she said, "but I liked Kelloggsville High School—the staff, the students, and the challenges they offered me."

Ms. Johnson is now a full-time teacher at KHS. She is a freshman class advisor and a judge on the creative writing committee. She has completed her second season as Kelloggsville Middle School girls' track coach.

Thirty-six students have signed up to try out for the Rockets, the KHS varsity soccer team. Ms. Johnson will be their coach for the 2006 fall season. Because she was willing to venture outside the box—outside her realm of comfort and familiarity and into a non-traditional job—she has become a role model for a young emerging soccer team that any player, male or female, would do well to emulate.

"Ms. Johnson has embraced all challenges and is making a difference in the lives of the students at Kelloggsville High School," Fine said. "She greets her students and athletes with a friendly smile and serves as a positive role model on a daily basis. We look forward to the impact she will make in the future at our school."

"I hope always to be an inspiration to my students," Ms. Johnson said. "I want to encourage them to become whatever they dream to be. I love teaching these kids; I love them teaching me." ☺



Upper Left Page: Jen Johnson in her classroom.
Above: Johnson with students

ALUMNI HIGHLIGHTS



Outstanding Educator Mary Adams

by Amy Moore

The Grand Valley State University College of Education and its Alumni Association are proud of the Spring recipient of the Outstanding Educator award. Mary considers herself a late bloomer, having entered college ten years later than her classmates. Mary Adams graduated from Montcalm Community College in 1989 with an Associates Degree and received a Distinguished Graduate Scholarship to attend Grand Valley State University. She continued to excel, was inducted into the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society, and graduated Cum Laude in 1991 from GVSU with an English language and literature major, elementary education minor, and an elementary teaching certificate. In 2002, Mary graduated from Western Michigan University with a Masters Degree in Reading.

Mary is employed with Greenville Public Schools, teaching at Lincoln Heights Elementary for the past 13 years. She is a proactive team player, choosing to be part of the solution. To meet her community's needs, she worked to co-create Mentor-A-Mom, a birth to school-age mentoring program designed to support at-risk mothers with their parenting skills and provide education in the areas of health, development, and school readiness.

She and another 4th grade teacher developed a team approach, which has since been adopted by other district fourth grade teachers. Mary co-authored the application that earned her school a Blue Ribbon Exemplary School Award last year. Mary loves being a part of the Lincoln Heights team—a fun-loving group of highly effective individuals with a shared commitment to do whatever it takes to provide the best possible education for all students.

Last year, she was selected by one of her former student graduates to be named in Who's Who Among America's Teachers, an annual publication in which graduating honor students are offered the opportunity to select one former teacher for recognition.

Mary has provided extra opportunities for her students, starting a student-staffed school store, student-authored newspaper, and written several grants, which brought enriching programs and equipment to Lincoln Heights. In her classroom, Mary is often heard saying "I just learned something new and that makes this is great day!" She instills this same enthusiasm for learning in her students. She embraces the principles of Love and Logic, and she incorporates strategies proven effective through brain research. Mary feels strongly that it is important to remain centered in a strong foundation of basics, balanced with an effective mix of new strategies, programs, and technologies, rather than swinging endlessly on the pendulum of extreme change.

When she is not at school, Mary relaxes with a good book in her Greenville home and enjoys spending time with her four grown children and five grandchildren, her parents, and her brothers and their families. ☺