

By Susan Reese

The Winners' Circle

THEY SHARE A DEDICATION TO CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND THE RESPECT OF THEIR COLLEAGUES; **THEY ARE ACTE'S AWARD-WINNING EDUCATORS FOR 2007.**

Leslie Watkins

2007 ACTE Teacher of the Year

She doesn't just look at a problem, Leslie Watkins looks for a solution to the problem, then implements that solution—and that is why she has been described as an innovative and creative teacher. While teaching at a school with a high minority population, she attended a conference about Project Graduation, an initiative begun by the state police in Kentucky. She took the ideas she got there and, ignoring everyone who told her it wouldn't work in a school such as hers, she started Project Graduation, which was not only successful, but is still in place today, even though Watkins now teaches at another school.

"It's nice to see when you start something that you can pass the torch, and it is still valuable today," says Watkins.

It helps that she put together a workbook and set up committees when she initiated the project. The all-night event includes games and other activities as well as an auction at the end in which students can bid on items using the points they have earned throughout the evening. The parents are so supportive of the event that they got sponsorships, which one year even included a car that was given away. It has been an effective way to keep students from drinking and driving on graduation night.

"On a night when they feel like they have really accomplished something, it keeps them from making a bad choice," says Watkins.

Another problem she observed at the school was the high teen pregnancy rate. So, using Perkins grant funds, she started a school day care program that included hands-on parental training for students. Even after she ran out of grant money, Watkins incorpo-



▲▲ Leslie Watkins

Watkins, now in her 26th year of teaching, innovates her way to solutions to the problems she sees around her in her family and consumer sciences education classes and in her school.

rated teen parenting classes into her family and consumer sciences education classes.

Now teaching at Reidland High School in Paducah, Kentucky, Watkins is still making a positive difference for her students through the new programs she has developed there. Among these are the early childhood education program and the culinary arts program.

Through her work with the student organization Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA), as well as through a community survey, Watkins found there was a strong interest in education careers, so she began the program in which students not

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only get all of the early childhood education curriculum, they also have the opportunity to participate in cooperative learning by going into kindergarten, day care and special needs classrooms for at least an hour four days a week. Because Watkins is a state-licensed day care provider, her students can earn an orientation certificate.

"They really are ahead of the game in having everything they need to be successful," she notes. That includes the dual credits they can earn in her program since she has articulation agreements with several postsecondary institutions.

Watkins has also enjoyed teaching the culinary arts program, and adds, "I have loved the preparation for teaching that. That's where the food part of our program is becoming career focused."

Using a Tech Prep grant, she is also doing a program that integrates math with carpentry, and her class is working with the carpentry program on a home they are building for a low-income family. Although the carpentry students have done such houses before, she and her students are excited about providing interior design services to the project for the first time.

Watkins is described as a positive role model for everyone in the community by a colleague who adds that she "lives what she teaches in her classroom."

"I'm in my 26th year of teaching, and I still love what I do," says Watkins, who adds she can't imagine teaching anything other than family and consumer sciences. "I know I chose the right area because I'm as excited now as ever—maybe even more so. I love being able to teach in an area where hands-on skills are so valuable and the connection with the real world is so much a part of what I do."

Mike Gillispie

2007 ACTE Outstanding Career and Technical Educator

Mike Gillispie grew up on a farm in south-east Arizona, so becoming an agriculture



« Mike Gillispie

Once the class clown in his high school agriculture class, Gillispie now directs the agribusiness and urban horticulture program in Glendale, Ariz, where he sees CTE leading his students to successful careers.

every minute of it."

During his high school teaching career, he is credited with helping to introduce a number of new programs, such as the biotech and the golf course management programs at Peoria High School. He also worked to develop the first dual enrollment articulation agreement with community colleges for golf and turf management in the state of Arizona.

For the past six years, Gillispie has been teaching at Glendale Community College in Glendale,

Arizona, where he is the director of the agribusiness and urban horticulture program. When he came to the program, the curriculum was in need of an update, and the program itself needed revitalization. At Glendale, he is credited with introducing new courses, certifications and degree programs, such as the turf and recreational management program. He also established articulation agreements between the college and five public high school districts in the state.

At the community college, Gillispie notes that the students have a more direct connection to the workforce, and he is proud of the many internship opportunities available to them, such as the ones with the professional baseball teams the Mariners, Padres and Rangers.

As a career-tech educator, he also is pleased to report, "Each one of our class offerings has some sort of hands-on outcome."

Gillispie has put his leadership skills to good use in his professional associations as well, having served as Arizona ACTE president, ACTE Region V vice president and Region V conference director. He has also been a member of the ACTE Policy

educator might seem like a logical step; but it almost didn't happen since his high school agriculture instructor didn't want him back in the class after his first year because, as Gillispie puts it, "I was too much of a nuisance. I was goofing off and being the class clown."

His father told him to talk to the teacher, Mr. English, and do whatever he had to do to get back into the class. Gillispie did just that, and now says that English's guidance and encouragement along with participation in FFA "really changed my life."

After high school, he went on to community college and then started farming. But his former high school teacher again found a way to assist him in furthering his education. English told him about a scholarship to the University of Arizona, so Gillispie went back to school and became an agriculture instructor himself.

"I student taught in Duncan, Arizona, and found a love for teaching," says Gillispie. "My teaching partner, John Mulcahy, taught me leadership skills, he taught me to listen well, and he helped make me a better person."

Gillispie taught high school agriculture education for 16 years and says, "I loved

Committee, and serves as the community college representative for Arizona ACTE. Gillispie again credits someone else with helping him succeed in this area, but this time it is not a colleague or teacher, it is his wife. Her support at home, he notes, also has made him a better teacher.

Teaching now at the community college has given Gillispie more time with his wife and two sons, as well as time to devote to his businesses in weed spraying and consulting. He knows he could focus on those businesses and make more money but says, "I enjoy what I'm doing with my students."

He has been described by a colleague as "a great mentor for students."

"I see what a positive difference career and technical education makes," says Gillispie, who credits it with keeping him on the right road and now sees what it has done for the success of his students. "I see it in the proof of their businesses that they've started and the contributions they have made to society."

He is now able to give back to others the gifts that career and technical education gave him. "That's probably been the best thing for me," says Gillispie.

Sandy Hume

2007 ACTE Outstanding New Career and Technical Teacher

When Sandy Hume was named the 2007 ACTE Outstanding New Career and Technical Teacher at the ACTE Annual Convention, she says she saw many furrowed brows of people who were wondering if she was in the right category. That's because she came to teaching later in life. First she worked in the business world to help put her husband through medical school, and she raised a family.

Sandy Hume ►►

Hume successfully made the transition from the business world to teaching. Her fresh perspective on education has inspired new programs in her school such as an advisor program and e-learning.

"I was quite the nontraditional student," says Hume, who has taught high school on an emergency contract and worked with Wisconsin's school-to-work program, which she describes as one of the state's premiere initiatives.

She has been teaching full time at Chippewa Valley Technical College since 2002 and says, "I love teaching because I love the students."

As in the business world, there are still deadlines to deal with, but, says Hume, "I get a lot more satisfaction out of teaching when I see one of my students get a job."

She also models lifelong learning for her students by remaining educated about the latest computer software, applications and certifications—and she jokes that she was the oldest one getting her master's on the day she accomplished that goal.

As part of her master's she studied student retention, a subject she and her colleagues were concerned about. Through research and follow-up surveys they found that the main reason students stayed in school was that there was a faculty member who cared about them. So Hume created an advisor program that paired a stu-

dent with a faculty member. The mentoring program is intended to help students with issues such as scheduling.

"It's not intended to replace the counselor," Hume explains. "The faculty member is here to listen, have coffee, and just stay in touch with the student."

Although some of the faculty may have been a bit hesitant at first, everyone is on board now—especially with such good results. "It has been very positive with both the students and the instructors," says Hume.

She also tries to create that community in the online courses she teaches, which is not always easy. "E-learning is not that much different from face-to-face classes," Hume notes, "but you have to develop a rapport and get back to the students fast when they ask questions."

She does want administrators to know that online courses are much more work because sometimes you may have to answer a question 25 times instead of once. But Hume has been described by one colleague as "tireless in her efforts to provide her students with the best learning opportunities."

Hume is equally energetic when it comes to her professional associations, serving as a member of the Wisconsin ACTE Board of Directors, chair of the Wisconsin ACTE Bylaws and Resolutions Committee and as past president of the largest local association in Wisconsin.

"I would strongly advocate for career and technical educators to be involved in ACTE," Hume says. "We absolutely need to support ACTE and our state associations. Without these associations, our chosen careers would not be as successful, and you get back more than you put into them. It's an honor to be able to be a part of an organization that represents career and technical education."





Joline Dunbar

2007 ACTE Outstanding Teacher in Community Service

In high school Joline Dunbar always felt a connection with her family and consumer sciences education teachers and loved being a part of FCCLA, so becoming a family and consumer sciences educator seemed like a natural fit. "I never even thought of being anything else," she says.

Now in her 25th year of teaching, Dunbar tells her students she won't quit until she loses her sense of hu-

mor, but she doesn't see that happening soon since she still loves teaching. She has been recognized for her work on the regional and state levels—and now on the national level as the ACTE Outstanding Teacher in Community Service. Her FCCLA chapter has won awards as well, including the National Join Hands Award, the National Stop the Violence Award and the National Career Connections Award.

"The strength of family and consumer sciences education really comes from FCCLA," Dunbar says. "The two are so powerful together."

◀◀ Joline Dunbar

A senior citizens carnival, a theatrical docudrama about a drunk driving incident, and a 26-booth health fair are among the 40–50 community service projects that Dunbar and her students engage in. "[The students] feel like they do so much good," she says.

Also Honored

Verlyn Velle

2007 ACTE Arch of Fame Award

Verlyn Velle has dedicated more than 35 years of her time to career and technical education. As the CTE director and tech prep coordinator for the Campbell County School District of Gillette, Wyoming, Velle makes a significant impact on the lives of students of various age groups. She also uses her influence to obtain funding for a variety of CTE programs.

Through the use of grants, Velle gave her students the opportunity to explore their career options. She wrote the proposal and received a \$500,000 School-to-Career Local Partnership Grant that allowed the school district to run career fairs and other guidance programs. Velle used Perkins funds to begin career centers in all of the county's high schools.

Velle has devoted much of her time and energy to ACTE. She is the past chair of the CTE Support Fund Committee and was a part of the task force to rewrite legislative language for the reauthorization of the Perkins Act. Velle is a former ACTE

board member and executive committee member. Currently, she is representing Region V on the ACTE Reorganization Committee.

Velle truly cares about the students of Campbell County and the advancement of career and technical education on the state and national levels.

One colleague notes, "Velle is truly dedicated to career and technical teachers, students, organizations and issues. She cares very much about all students and their future."

Walter Woodhull

2007 ACTE Award of Merit

Walter "Woody" Woodhull has advanced career and technical education on the state and national levels. As the director of the Illinois Employer Advocacy Initiative (IEAI), he is able to combine his experiences to create productive members of society. In his mission to improve career and technical education, Woodhull has worked with people of all ranks.

Woodhull began his CTE career as a

teacher and career counselor. He then went on to the state level, working with the New Jersey State Department of Education. In this position, he was able to use well-known local sports figures to promote the value of career and technical education. Woodhull went to work for the assistant secretary of the Office of Vocational and Adult Education and later as the public information director for the National Advisory Council for Vocational Education. Using these experiences, he helped to create IEAI.

IEAI was formed through a partnership between the Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois ACTE and the Illinois Political Action Committee. The initiative seeks to encourage various employers from different industries to advocate for state and federal CTE funding. Woodhull has helped IEAI get more than 1,500 people involved. He has made CTE funding at the state and federal levels a priority.

One colleague says, "It takes people with the drive and initiative of Woodhull to promote and develop new and innovative ideas which will support career and technical education today and in the future."

Dunbar and her students perform an average of 40–50 community service projects each year. The favorite of her students is the docudrama that simulates a drunk-driving accident. It is a difficult one for Dunbar because it is so emotional. The “accident victim’s” real parents play the parts of the grieving parents, and some have become so caught up in the roles that they broke down sobbing.

As difficult as it is, Dunbar knows it is an important activity and adds, “It makes a huge impact on our student body.”

Her students have also done a senior citizens carnival at the local retirement center, adapting carnival games such as the beanbag toss to the ability level of the seniors. They do a haunted house each year at the retirement center as a fundraiser for the center’s activities. It has

become so popular with her students that this year she had so many volunteers they had to be divided into shifts.

Sometimes the students will see an event such as Hurricane Katrina and come to Dunbar and say, “We have to do something to help. They need school supplies there.”

She describes her students as highly motivated and notes, “They feel like they do so much good.”

One of Dunbar’s favorite projects is one they started this year—the health fair. “It was huge,” she says. “We had 26 booths from the community, the college and different agencies, and so many opportunities for my FCCLA members to get involved.”

The issues addressed by the health fair are real ones the students have to deal

with—from tanning-related skin cancer to obesity to teen pregnancy. Through activities such as these, Dunbar sees how her students learn skills in class and then put those skills to work through FCCLA.

She also hears from former students who are starting community service projects at their colleges. That’s another thing that makes teaching so rewarding for her and why she still loves what she does. She believes that what she gives her students makes them more successful academically and more successful in life because they get to see the good that they do, what they have learned and how they have put their education to work.

“What we teach in family and consumer sciences is used every single day,” notes Dunbar. “That’s the beauty of career and technical education.” **I**

Katherine Cliatt

2007 ACTE Outstanding Service Award

Katherine Cliatt has been an influential figure in career and technical education for more than 25 years. This South Carolinian is an education associate for business, marketing and information technology at the South Carolina Department of Education. Known as a very dedicated person, Cliatt demands a lot of herself and expects the same of others.

Cliatt enthusiastically started working for the South Carolina Department of Education in 1993. During her time there she has encouraged the passage of the 1994 School-to-Work Act, supervised 32 Cisco Academies, and created a certification program for business and marketing education. Cliatt also formed a partnership with the Oracle Corporation that generated 40 Oracle Academies through the use of grants.

Cliatt has been an asset to ACTE and SCACTE for many years. She is in the Business and Marketing Education Divisions and

is an active member of the National Association of Supervisors of Business Education. Cliatt has set an example for her peers through her work with various student and CTE organizations.

“Cliatt believes in our students,” notes a colleague. “She is held in high esteem by her colleagues and is often consulted for her expertise in business, marketing and information technology.”

Richard Prows

2007 Carl Perkins Humanitarian Award

A highly creative and energetic person, Richard Prows lends his expertise to many organizations. Now retired, Prows was the CEO of Prowswood—a real estate design, construction, development and realtor firm in Bountiful, Utah. In his spare time he works tirelessly behind the scenes to improve the lives of young people and help them discover their own possibilities.

Prows has worked in the home construction business for more than 45 years and authored the *Home Builders Institute/Quick*

Management System. Despite his busy work schedule, Prows found time to volunteer on various committees dealing with career and technical education and served as a presenter at many CTE conferences.

Prows has been on the boards of many organizations, including the Children’s Museum of Utah, the Utah State Advisory Committee and the Salt Lake Chamber of Commerce. Currently, he is on the board of Junior Achievement of Utah, where he helped implement the Enterprise Village and Financial Park. This program educates students in grades K–12 on financial topics such as free enterprise, business and economics.

Prows stresses the importance of having career and technical education throughout the state of Utah and donates his time to organizations interested in the advancement of CTE.

“I know of no single individual in this state who has championed the concept of career and technical education with more tenacity,” a colleague says of Prows. “He loves young people and desires to help them achieve their occupational dreams.” **I**