

MEEC Teacher of the Year Banquet

Local Teachers Honored at Annual Event



More than sixty educators, students, business and civic leaders joined together in recognizing MEEC's 2007 Teacher of the Year at the Spring Valley Lake Country Club in Victorville on April 26th for the annual awards banquet.

Mary O'Connell took top honors as Teacher of the Year for her work on creating an Environmental Career Pathway at Eastside High School in Lancaster.

O'Connell, a Biology Teacher and Science Department Head, was praised by her principal Tom Grady. "Mary is the kind of teacher that turns kids onto science and our test scores prove it," Grady said during the presentation of her award.

O'Connell was presented with a commemorative Teacher of the Year plaque and a \$300 prize for her work with her students in the Antelope Valley Union High School District.

Barbara Ward-Lawe and Wendi Rodriguez were each named MEEC Teachers of Excellence for their work with students and the community in the Hesperia Unified School District and the Snowline Joint Unified School District, respectively.

Although Barbara is a high school counselor at Hesperia's Community Day School, she has successfully trained students on how to give effective presentations to other students, teachers and the community on ways to conserve energy as well as other energy efficiency measures everyone can use. She is also instrumental in

helping inspire her students to volunteer as aides for environmental workshops, activities and community clean ups.

Wendi, an eighth grade teacher at Heritage School in Phelan, keeps her students involved in a variety of environmental projects including taking them on annual whale watching trips and raising and caring for exotic fish. She is also the advisor for the school's Marine Society.

During the awards banquet, Wendi was honored by one of her former students and MEEC Executive Board member, Desirea Haggard who presented her with her award. Haggard currently works as an Environmental Engineer with TXI Riverside Cement.

"Wendi's efforts in the classroom and concern for taking care of the environment is one of the factors that helped shape me in my environmental career path" Haggard said.

All teachers were selected after nominations went out in early March to school principals and administrators. Winners were selected after a review of the nominations by MEEC Executive Board Members.

The High Desert Academy Jazz Band provided live entertainment as everyone was treated to a well prepared meal in the beautiful surroundings of the Spring Valley Lake Country Club.