

A scientist crowned Camille's 'Teacher of the Month'

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From Conservation Corps to teaching in the Southwest

Anne Burke, sixth grade science teacher at Gallup Middle School was selected Camille's Sidewalk Café's Teacher of the Month.

Coming to the end of the school year, students have only one thing in mind – anxiously awaiting for the last day of school. So, anticipations are high and keeping their minds on the scholastic agenda is definitely a challenge. This award could not have come at a better time as Burke told the *Gallup Sun*.

"I so thank Camille's for sponsoring such a lovely award for teachers, it was given at a point where I really needed it," Burke said. "Oh, my goodness, I was just so pleased and excited, it came at a great time, because getting towards the end of the school year we're all feeling a little tired, it was just a wonderful morale booster."

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Raised in Wisconsin, Burke's teaching career began at Gallup Middle school in August 2016. Prior to that she spent the last seven years living and working with the Crane and Wetlands Conservation Corps in the country of South Africa. She has spent a combined total of 23 years in the Conservation Corps. When she came back to the United States, Burke decided it was time to give back.

"I have had a wonderful life and career, as a female scientist, and I really wanted to enter the teaching profession to get young men and women really excited about careers in Science, Technology, and Biology."

Colleagues throughout Burke's career had told her she would make a great teacher. She was facilitating training programs in various positions at the time. She started thinking about it, and reflected on an old high school biology teacher who made an impact in her life.

"I was probably in the seventh or eighth grade, and I had this female high school biology teacher who told us that she had studied in the Amazon Rain forest," she said. "She had blow guns, and described how they made poison from toad skins, things like that. From that day on I decided I wanted to be a female biologist, she just so inspired me, mentored, and always encouraged me."

Burke said she thought a lot about her biology teacher before making the decision.

"She would want me to pass it forward as well."

Upon entering the teaching field, Burke says she had no idea how complex it would be. She knew it wasn't going to be easy. But afterwards it all fell in place.

"There are so many different moving parts; the classroom management, individual students, the administration, the actual subject that your teaching," she said. "I'm finding it a tremendous learning curve, but I'm enjoying every minute of it and I really like the kids."

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Burke says what she loves most about her job is seeing the kids learn something and really understand it. The excitement in their faces, and for them to come to the realization that they have whatever it takes to learn and to become successful in life.

“So, when I see that in the kid's faces of that growing confidence, that is my reward.”

When asked of what advice she has for those wanting to enter the teaching field, Burke teared up.

“I would say if you follow your heart, and your heart will tell you; it's a lot of hard work ... but very rewarding.”

In her spare time, Burke spends it in Gallup, and the surrounding areas bird watching. Being based in conservation, she visits national monuments looking at all the birds of different species.

***Story and photos by
For the Sun***