

Elementary school teacher 30-years strong

Written by By Dee Velasco For the Sun
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Catherine A. Miller Elementary Teacher Claire Seibert is Teacher of the Month

Once again, it's time to recognize another outstanding teacher for excellence in teaching. Each month during the school year, Camille's Sidewalk Cafe in Gallup chooses and recognizes one local teacher as Teacher of the Month.

Teachers are nominated either by students or those who feel they deserve recognition for their seemingly effortless, hard work. Camille's then presents the winning teacher with an award for excellence in their field.

This month, Claire Seibert was nominated as Teacher of the Month.

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Seibert is a fourth-grade teacher at Catherine A. Miller Elementary School in Church Rock. She's been teaching for the past years — her career began in Hagerstown, M.D. in 1988.

Despite her long tenure, however, Seibert said she was completely surprised to get the call about her nomination.

"I felt overwhelmed and humbled really, like walking on air," she said. "This is kind of cool, surprised that someone would have nominated me. I felt so humble because there are so many worthy teachers out there and so glad that Camille's is doing this, so thank you to Camille's for doing this."

Originally from Baltimore, MD, Seibert made her way to the Southwest on a mission trip with her church, and she fell in love with the area.

Seibert said she heard about the shortage of teachers here and decided to apply for a teaching position.

In Maryland, Seibert taught middle school and GED classes, but this time around, she decided to teach at the elementary school level. She said fourth grade is a fun age.

"Every year is a different year with the kids. I love having an impact on them, having them believe in themselves," she said. "I can't imagine doing anything else. I like planning activities for them, especially history — even reenacting for them parts of history."

Seibert knew she wanted to be a teacher back in first grade when she was inspired by her own teacher.

At home, when she played school with her 11 siblings, she always opted for the teacher role.

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In college, Seibert obtained her Bachelor's degree in education, as well as a Master's in modern humanities, which, she joked, didn't get her far — she simply liked the topics.

Although she said she loves what she does, Seibert's not a big fan of all the testing.

"It really takes away from the teaching, like how it used to be, the fun activities that teachers plan," she said. "It's very unfair to the students; we differentiate to the students with their learning level, but the tests are not differentiating to them."

Despite the testing and all it entails for a teacher, Seibert said Catherine A. Miller is a great school and she's glad for the opportunity to teach there. She said everyone is supportive and the staff is amazing — even the parents and surrounding community come out to support the school.

To those who wish to pursue a career in teaching, Seibert said, "You really have to love the children and want to put in the extra hours. It's so rewarding in other ways. We have these impacts on kids' lives, and sometimes we won't know — that's what I love about teaching."

If you're interested in nominating your favorite teacher for Teacher of the Month, contact Camille's Sidewalk Cafe at (505) 722-5017 or stop by 306 S. 2nd St. in Gallup.

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