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## Sequoyah math teacher earns Greenblatt Award her first year

by Terri Hogan | Staff Writer

Sequoyah Elementary School teacher Jaclyn Klueger has conveyed an important lesson to her third-grade students: If you work hard, you can be successful.



Naomi Brookner/The Gazette

Jaclyn Klueger, winner of the Marian Greenblatt Excellence in Teaching Award for a first-year teacher, teaches math to third-graders at Sequoyah Elementary School in Derwood.

The students sat in the audience earlier this month and watched their teacher receive the Marian Greenblatt Excellence in Teaching Award for a first-year teacher.

"I was not a perfect student; I couldn't do art or music," Klueger said as she accepted the award. "But look where I am today. I'm here because I worked hard."

The award ceremony was held April 2 at the school and Klueger's students sat in the front row in awe.

"I was just struck looking at these five or six girls who were just transfixed," said Marshall Greenblatt, president and founder of the Marian Greenblatt Educational Fund. "They couldn't take their eyes off of her and I think that some of these girls will probably become teachers some day because they admire her so much."

Klueger, 26, grew up in Illinois, but her family moved to this area for a job opportunity for her father. She graduated from Winston Churchill High School in Potomac and then attended Boston University, where she received an undergraduate degree in psychology.

The Potomac resident worked in the fundraising industry for two years, but during that time realized that she missed working with children. She had completed an internship with an adoption agency and while working in the fundraising industry had created a library program for students who were preparing for bar and bat mitzvahs to collect and donate books for underprivileged children.

"I knew I wanted to work with kids again, so I went back to the University of Maryland and got my master's degree in teaching."

Klueger said she loves her job, although admits it is harder than she ever imagined it would be.

"I get to laugh all day," she said. "They're a great group of kids and they really keep me on my toes."

She prides herself on the relationships she has developed with her students.

"I didn't realize how close I would get to them, but it's been a good thing," she said. "When I got engaged and when I ran a marathon, the kids knew and their parents knew. My first year has been easier because of my relationships with the students, parents and staff here."

As a certified scuba diver, Klueger's room is decorated with an ocean and beach theme.

One special student is selected as the "catch of the week" for working hard and being a good role model and is given the opportunity to sit in a beach chair set up in the corner of the room.

"I had to make my classroom as much like me as possible, since I knew I'd practically be living here the first year," she said.

Klueger said she's been told she does things differently in her classroom and her ideas seem to be working.

In the fall, she held a mock election where students researched their candidates, voted, and charted and graphed the results. Klueger's grandparents served as the election supervisors.

"I believe in making learning fun and I strive for real-world applications," she said. "The students need to see the point in order to convince themselves to work hard at it."

Others recognize her dedication and commitment to bringing out the best in her students.

"She has a way of motivating her students with her personality — they want to learn because she makes learning fun," Assistant Principal Chris Woodcock said. "She takes the time to plan her lessons and differentiate them to meet all the learners' needs. You can just feel the energy when you walk in to her classroom. She truly is a remarkable first-year teacher."

Sarah Hochuli, parent of third grade student Owen, nominated Klueger for the Greenblatt Award.

"I think she has done an outstanding job," she said. "My son has loved her since day one, and it is really nice to see a young person giving her all to her job."

Marshall Greenblatt said it is difficult to select a winner each year since there are many quality teachers in Montgomery County.

"She stood out because she is so caring of her students and so tenacious about seeking out senior teachers for tips on how to do things better," he said. "She's a good, hard-working teacher and she creates a nice atmosphere that makes kids happy to come to school."

Klueger said winning the award verifies that her hard work has paid off and that her past eight months of teaching has made a difference.

"Other people have seen that I have changed lives in some way every day, whether it is helping a child to read or making a child feel loved," she said. "I feel like I have accomplished what I have set out to do and it is nice to see that others feel that way, too."

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