

Local teacher among nation's elite

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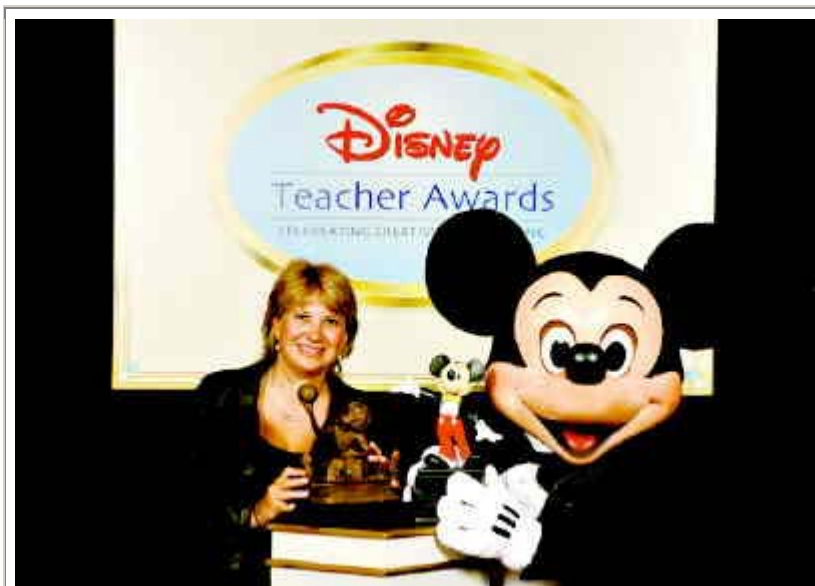
INDEPENDENCE -- Meg Greiner has been honored at countless ceremonies celebrating her contributions to teaching.

But the Independence Elementary School physical education instructor says few experiences compare to receiving an award from Mickey Mouse.

Greiner, 42, was named Outstanding Education Specialist at the Disney Teacher Awards Gala in Anaheim, Calif. last week.

Forty-four out of 75,000 nominated teachers from across the United States were finalists for the annual event, which Greiner describes as "a red carpet affair that looks a lot like the Oscars."

Greiner was tapped from 15 in her category, which targets teachers involved in physical education, talented and gifted students and the arts."



Meg Greiner receives her Outstanding Education Specialist award from none other than Mickey Mouse.



Greiner receiving the award.

I was overwhelmed," said Greiner a day after returning from a week of professional workshops and award festivities at Disneyland.

"All of the teachers there were so outstanding, they're far beyond the most talented and ... passionate teachers I've ever met in my life.

"I don't know how they could have judged one from the group."

Greiner has received numerous distinctions as an elementary school teacher during her 18-year career, many of them since being hired at IES in 1996.

In 2005, she was named to USA Today's All-Star USA Teaching Team and was selected elementary teacher of the year by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education.

Much of that success is due to her innovative approaches to teaching, such as TEAM (Together Everybody Achieves More) Time, a daily program that sees all IES staff and students engage in an exercise and team-building activity.

Greiner received a \$10,000 prize, plus \$5,000 for IES, when she was named as a nominee last May. And she took home \$15,000 for this latest award.

"That's nice, of course," she said, laughing. "I'll still have to pay taxes on it, but I'm getting more than I had."

For now, she's just eager to get back in the classroom.

"My students are the best part of this job," she said. "I love to work with my kids."