

NHD TEACHER RECEIVES AWARD FROM NAACP

By: Laura Kmitch

On March 18, Virginia Rankin, an NHD teacher at Holloman Middle School on Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico, was presented with the Otero County Educator of the Year award by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The ceremony was held at the Holloman Enlisted Club and was attended by local dignitaries, representatives of the NAACP from around New Mexico, and NAACP National Board Member Alfred Rucks.

This award is given to a teacher, librarian, counselor, or coach in Otero County who is nominated by a student. Isaiah Scott, president of the Otero County NAACP believes this award is important because “very few people give teachers their due.” Rankin, who was nominated by sixth grader Paige Williams, described receiving the award is a “great honor.”

Rankin always wanted to be a teacher; she believes teaching as her passion. “I love teaching and there isn’t anything else in this world I would rather be doing,” she said. Rankin got involved with NHD as a student at New Mexico State University. She credits Leslie Berglioff, the southern New Mexico NHD regional coordinator, for getting her “hooked” on NHD and says she promised Berglioff that as a teacher, “I would do [NHD] as part of my classroom.”

She kept her word. Rankin became a sixth grade social studies teacher at Holloman Middle School in 2004. In June of 2005, after her first year teaching with NHD, she brought five students to the national contest at the University of Maryland. This year Holloman Middle School is sending 65 students to the regional competition. In addition to her teaching and NHD duties, Rankin serves as a team leader. She is also involved in Red Ribbon Week, the veterans’ assembly, and the Black Heritage Assembly.

Rankin’s excitement about NHD is apparent: “I wish there had been something like [NHD] for me when I was in school. I would have drooled over a project like this!” She is already looking forward to next year because she “wants to do this every year ... because it is such a worthwhile and enjoyable thing to do.”

Despite her contagious enthusiasm, Paige Williams said that Rankin’s best quality is that “she treats everybody fairly.” Rankin’s other students obviously agree with Paige Williams’s respect and affection for Mrs. Rankin.

Due to budget cuts and low numbers at Holloman Middle School in late 2005, it looked like Rankin’s position would be eliminated and she would not return after the winter holiday break. Her students petitioned the base commander and the school board.

Rankin’s students won their hands-on civics education lesson; she is back at work and hoping that her students do well at their upcoming NHD competitions.

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