



Current News and Events

Science Teacher Wins National Award

St. Joseph's Academy science teacher Linda Messina was named a U.S. Department of Education 2008 American Star of Teaching. She was one of five private school teachers from across the country chosen for the award, part of the Department of Education's Office of Non-Public Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement and Teacher-to-Teacher Initiative.

"...the award belongs to the whole school...every person at SJA has helped to mold me into the teacher I am today." Linda Messina, science teacher

More than 5,000 teachers were nominated for this year's award, which recognizes and honors superior teachers with a track record of improving student achievement, using innovative instructional strategies and making a difference in the lives of their students.

"It meant so much to me that the school nominated me for this award," Messina said. "The nomination was the real award for me. I feel the award belongs to the whole school, as each and every person at SJA has helped to mold me into the teacher and person I am today. I have really found peace within myself since becoming part of the SJA community."

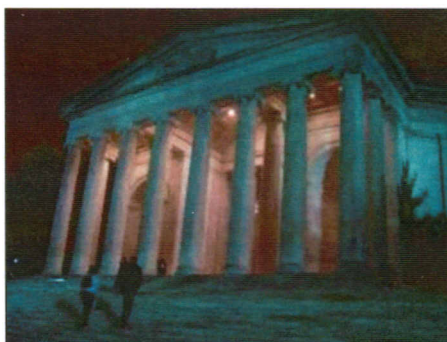


Photo courtesy of Linda Messina



Messina was honored at a formal recognition ceremony during the Fourth Annual Private School Leadership Conference, held September 26 in Washington, D.C. Following the ceremony, Messina participated in a panel discussion with the other American Stars of Teaching honorees. She presented the LSU Coastal Roots: School Seedling Nursery Program for Wetland Restoration, which she helped to create in 2001. SJA served as a pilot school for the program, which has grown to include 24 schools with another 24 slated to become involved this year.

Coastal Roots students establish wetland plant nurseries in which they grow seedlings to plant in coastal habitat restoration projects. In the spring and fall of 2007, 708 students and 110 adults/chaperones participated in 16 restoration plantings, transplanting 2,929 seedlings and 6,230 grass plugs.

Messina also discussed the ways in which her science students undertake outreach efforts to help teach younger students about the environment, including participating each year in Ocean Commotion, Earth Day and Weatherfest. Last year, her students served as mentors to McKinley Middle Magnet School students as they prepared research projects for their school science fair.

Messina was accompanied to Washington, D.C., by her husband, Dr. Larry Messina, SJA President Sister Adele Lambert, CSJ and Principal Linda Fryoux Harvison.

"As I reflect on our experience in our nation's Capitol, I am keenly aware that St. Joseph's Academy is a place where young women are challenged by excellent teachers," Sr. Adele said. "Linda Messina exemplifies the qualities of both an American Star of Teaching and a woman of the charm of St. Joseph's Academy. This year's award was given to teachers who collaborated with others in the educational process. Collaboration is one of the skills we practice at SJA. In describing her Coastal Roots project, Linda not only shared the educational process but also the numerous ways of teaching and learning collaboration."

Harvison called Messina a great example of reaching out to others through her innovative projects and programs and said her teaching style encourages her students to strive for excellence. "Linda is our mission statement in action," Harvison said. "She lives out our mission of faith development, academic excellence and personal growth by challenging our students in the classroom, stretching them through community service and being a true role model of her faith. I am very proud of Linda and feel she is highly deserving of this significant recognition."