

By Erich Thurow, Chairman D200 Education Foundation

December was a busy month for the Education Foundation Board and January will be even busier as we prepare for our annual Dinner/Auction event that is the major fundraiser for our organization. The big news to share is that we selected our 2015 Award of Excellence winner and we also voted to honor one of our former Trustees, the late Sue Palmore.

In November of 2012, the long time Board of Education member and liaison to the Foundation, passed away after a heroic battle with cancer. One of the most humble residents of Woodstock, Sue's list of contributions to the students and residents of District 200, along with a listing of her awards and honors, would fill several columns, but she would chastise me for writing them down. Though she would probably protest, we believe it is fitting that from this point forward our annual award to honor an individual for his or her long-term commitment and contributions to excellence in education in D200 will be called The Sue Palmore Award of Excellence.

It is my honor to announce that this year's recipient of The Sue Palmore Award of Excellence is Miguel Rodriguez. Mr. Rodriguez is a supervisory associate at Woodstock North High School. While his duties at WNHS involve assisting the administration and staff in the smooth operation of the school, that doesn't begin to explain the impact he has on the students and the families of our community.

North principal Brian McAdow, who nominated Mr. Rodriguez for the award, told us that when he was interviewing for the position, "Miguel expressed his powerful desire to connect with students and help them achieve." McAdow went on to say that from the day he began at the school "Miguel Rodriguez has given his heart and soul to the students and staff at WNHS."

Our nomination guidelines ask for the nominator's letter along with three letters of recommendation in support. We received seven letters on behalf of Mr. Rodriguez, and we're told that many more wanted to contribute to his documents. While I can't recount all of the dozens of stories that we were told about him, let me give you just two examples of what Miguel has done to deserve this award. In 2012, after attending a professional conference, he was instrumental in forming the Future Latino Leaders organization at the school. This past May the group awarded the first Miguel Rodriguez Future Latino Leader Scholarship Award.

One other example of Mr. R's involvement in the lives of his students is the time he takes to council and advise Latino students and their families about the benefits of continuing education. He works with students who apply to college and has helped several obtain scholarships. I had the privilege of announcing the award winner to the students at WNHS last week, and their reaction was thunderous applause and cheers.

The award will be presented at our event on January 31st at the Village Banquet Hall in Union. We have chosen a Mardi Gras theme for this year's event, and hope the community will join us in honoring Mr. Radriguez and in raising money for our grant program by attending the event. Please check our website www.d200edfoundation.org for more information and to purchase tickets.