

“PORTRAITS OF SUCCESS” AWARD NOMINATION

Name of Nominee: **Richard Thomas**
District: Nevada City School District
School: Reward Mine Community Day School
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Name of Nominator: Roger Steel
District: Nevada City School District
School: Reward Mine CDS
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Category: **Teacher**

It is my honor to write this letter of recommendation for Richard Thomas for the Community Day School Network, *Portraits of Success Award*. I can think of no other teacher that has been more committed to his students than Richard.

When Richard Thomas opens the doors to the Reward Mine Community Day School each day, he is in essence offering his students a classroom atmosphere of learning, creativity, respect, friendship, diversity, safety, self-esteem building, and understanding. This has been the cornerstone of his program since its first day of operation in January 2001. Richard has pioneered a program to fit the special needs of every student that has been enrolled. From the curriculum to the electives to community service projects, Richard has found a way to both reach and challenge each student. Perhaps it is the fresh enthusiasm that he brings to his classroom each day or his careful and thoughtful plan in creating a powerful alternative learning environment. Richard's belief that all students can achieve in the classroom and develop as valued and caring individuals, carries through to his students. Some important successes at the Reward Mine CDS:

A Reward Mine student represented Nevada County in the 2004 California State Junior High Spelling Bee. The 8th grader finished first in the Nevada County Spelling Bee and finished 20th in the State.

Reward Mine has a fully-equipped kitchen which enables home economics to be taught using first-hand experience. For the 03-04 school year, students learned how to bake bread and sold loaves to school staff. The donations they received for the loaves were put back into the baking program which enabled the students to continue learning baking and cooking techniques.

Reward Mine students regularly participate in community service activities. Students volunteer one day a week at the Nevada County Public Library where they shelve books and assist the staff. Students assisted the South Yuba River Citizens League of Nevada City with placing hundreds of labels beside city drains in their drain-labeling project.

Students learned the skill of repairing and rebuilding bicycles which were then given to the homeless clients of the Loaves and Fishes Homeless Shelter in Sacramento. While students were learning valuable mechanical skills they also built confidence in themselves which carried over into other aspects of their lives and in the classroom. The end result of this community project was the feeling of giving something valuable to someone who has less and receiving a “thank you.”

The biggest measure of success with Richard Thomas and his impact on his students is watching them grow as individuals throughout the year. Last year, two students were referred back to the mainstream middle school. Those two students succeeded at the middle school and graduated to high school.

I could not imagine our Community Day School without the expertise, the enthusiasm or the desire of Richard Thomas. Each day he brings these qualities and more to the classroom, the students, the staff, and the district. It is without any reservation that I highly recommend Richard Thomas to you as a candidate for the Community Day School Network *Portraits of Success Award*.

Sincerely,

Roger Steel
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