The 1985 National Humane Education Teacher of the Year Finalists

by Bill DeRosa

In addition to introducing Children & Animals readers to Kathryn Anderson, NAAHE is pleased to honor the three teachers who were named finalists in this year's Humane Education Teacher of the Year selection. Our finalists have done an outstanding job of incorporating humane education activities into the daily curricula. We hope that you will be able to make use of some of their innovative ideas and activities in developing lessons for your own classroom.

Dr. Joyce Bloom

The name of finalist Dr. Joyce Bloom is synonymous with humane education in New York City. Joyce teaches health and physical education to kindergarten through fifth-grade students at Community School 6 in the Bronx. She conducts numerous humane education activities that often extend beyond the classroom to parents and other adults in the citywide.

The nature of Joyce’s activities suggests a dual role for humane education: to create positive attitudes and behavior toward animals and at the same time to help children learn in other curriculum areas. In one of her more extensive projects, Joyce has designed and conducted a humane education unit in movement for physical education classes. The unit includes instruction in responsible pet ownership and an introductory lesson on the concept of animal rights.

One activity in the unit requires students to act out their interpretation of what it would be like to be an insect or a dog or a cat. Students then discuss the issues of pet overpopulation and responsible pet ownership.

Some of Joyce’s greatest accomplishments in humane education he in the areas of media publicity, staff development, and parental involvement. She has produced two television programs, which will be rerun regularly. Joyce has also provided staff development programs and resource materials to teachers and staff in her school and throughout the city. For example, she frequently presents workshops on humane education such as one titled Saturday Science, designed for New York City science teachers. Joyce has also designed and coordinated several humane education presentations, which have been given by guest speakers, for the Community School 6 Parents’ Association.

In addition to her work in the classroom and with teachers throughout the city, Joyce serves as an advisor to the Advisory Council for the New York City Humane Education Committee.

Julaine Demge

Finalist Julaine Demge is known throughout her school as the animal expert. Whenever students or staff members have animal-related questions or find injured animals, they turn to Julaine for advice. As a kindergarten teacher at Garrison Elementary School in Oceanside, California, Julaine is committed to promoting principles of respect and compassion for animals in all her classes. As Julaine explains, “I want to change the uncaring attitude many people have toward animals.”

To transform this commitment into action, Julaine incorporates humane education into her classes on a weekly basis. In Julaine’s classes, children learn that their actions can affect animals. “I don’t think we give children enough credit for being able to understand the connections between human behavior and animal suffering,” she explains.

Julaine’s emphasis on humane education not only helps her increase positive attitudes and behavior toward animals but also helps to motivate students to excel in other areas of the curriculum. Once a year, during Be Kind to Animals Week, Julaine conducts a series of schoolwide activities that include poster contests, essay contests, play writing and performing. Thus, speakers, and a pet parade. In an essay contest held this year, students were asked to write on the topic, “If I were President Reagan, I would improve the treatment of animals by . . .” Julaine notes that “students respond very positively to activities like writing or arts and crafts when the theme centers around animals.”

In addition to the activities she conducts personally, Julaine utilizes community resources and specialists to present programs to her students. In the past, these have included personnel from the local humane society and a wildlife officer to do door-to-door presentations on such programs. Julaine loans to her student learning.

Julaine has also incorporated humane education into the development of materials. She has created a wildlife care kit, which is used by throughout her district miniature library and contains tapes, books, films, games, puppets, and teacher lesson plans. Before a school or teacher uses the kit, Julaine conducts in-service training sessions to familiarize staff members with the kit’s materials and resources. Reactions to the animal care kit from teachers and administrators have been very positive.

Timothy Keane, principal of Garrison Elementary School, notes that “the kit is another example of Julaine’s deep commitment to quality teaching and to animals.”

Julaine is an active member of numerous animal welfare organizations and serves on the Board of Directors of the Oceana Humane Society.

Anita Martincich

Finalist Anita Martincich believes in teaching by example. Whether she is freeing an insect trapped in her classroom or rescuing a litter of stray kittens born in the schoolyard, Anita promotes principles of humane education through her behavior as well as through her classroom activities. Anita teaches first grade at the Neil Cummins Elementary School in Cortez, Madera. Her objective as a humane educator is to “help children develop understanding of and a strong human respect for animals—both wild and domestic.”

To achieve this goal, Anita incorporates a variety of humane education activities into her daily curriculum. Through these animal-related projects, she also helps to pique students’ interest in traditional subjects such as art, science, and geography.

In one of her most successful activities, Anita’s students participated in an art contest sponsored by the Animal Protection Institute. Before actually drawing their pictures, the students spent considerable time learning about the characteristics and behavior of their animal subjects. Three of Anita’s first graders had winning entries.

As part of their recent study of Africa, Anita’s class sent letters and drawings (many of African animals) to students in a primary school in Kenya. In their letters, the children asked many questions about the animals in Kenya’s wildlife reserves and are currently awaiting replies. Anita notes that “this activity has heightened the interest of my class in Africa’s beautiful wild animals.”

To help teach students about the needs, habitats, and adaptations of wild and domestic animals, Anita often invites representatives from the Marin Humane Society and the Marin Wildlife Center into her classroom to conduct activities. In addition, at the end of each year, Anita’s students construct paper maché animal models and place them according to their appropriate habitats in a display of land, water, and sky. Students are then given the opportunity to share their displays with parents during the school’s annual open house in late spring.

In addition to her work with students, Anita has made strong efforts to promote humane education among her fellow teachers. She encourages other teachers and administrators to provide funds for classroom animal welfare organizations and frequently circulates animal-related petitions among her colleagues.

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