I recently had the honor of interviewing Glenda Schneekloth, the 2003 Paraprofessional of the Year. My intent was to identify the personal traits that made her performance stand out above all others. Instead, what I found was a humble, sensitive individual who attributed her success to the wealth of tools surrounding her, helping her to succeed.

Glenda has been a paraprofessional for 16 years. Her unwavering commitment to the place where she works and the people she works with has kept her employed at the same school system, the Luverne Public School District, for her entire paraprofessional career. When asked about her lengthy tenure with the same district, Glenda comments that she enjoys the sense of family created among the staff, teachers, and students, adding, “It shows you how much care for the children exists in our team effort.”

Glenda truly sees this team as a key to her success: “I hang out with lots of friends at school: teachers, teachers, teachers.”

This is the last issue of ParaLink after 12 years of publication!

We are moving completely to the Web with a new format!

Watch http://id2.umn.edu/para for checklists, short articles, models, and more!
paraprofessionals, students…. They have all rubbed off on me.”

The Luverne Public School District: Lending to Success

The Luverne Public School district currently employs over 40 paraprofessionals, with 11 of these at the high school where Glenda works. She is quick to point out the importance of their weekly paraprofessional meetings as well as their continual close work with each other. This collaborative method ensures that students get the individual attention they require. Also contributing to Glenda’s success is the existence of a paraprofessional resource room which functions as a headquarters for the paraprofessionals and a place where they can touch base with two supervising special education teachers. The paraprofessionals spend each hour of the school day in a different classroom helping students, creating a dynamic environment for Glenda and her co-workers. Additionally, the administration of the Luverne Public School District takes the training and professional development of paraprofessionals very seriously. The district Staff Development Committee includes at least one paraprofessional representative, a position Glenda has held. While on this committee, she pushed for improved training opportunities for paraprofessionals.

Glenda also takes an active role in her own education and professional development. She is currently working to become a Title I certified paraprofessional, taking the responsibility to document each workshop, in-service, and core competency requirement as she completes them.

Attitude:

Glenda’s Secret Weapon
To say Glenda is humble in attributing her success to anything but her wonderful co-workers is an understatement. Glenda believes that her performance is a reflection of the role models with whom she is privileged to work. She is constantly finding inspiration in her fellow paraprofessionals and teachers, and she understands how important it is to constantly update those she works with regarding a student’s progress and goals. But when pressed to find that one special trait that sets her apart from others, she replies, “I think my positive attitude is my most valuable tool. It affects how I teach, how I view training, how I observe what others have done, and how I apply these lessons to what I have to do to make things work.” Glenda’s positive attitude also affects her definition of failure. She does not consider any of the experiences she has had over the past 16 years

2003 Paraprofessional of the Year, continued from cover

Paraprofessionals...a critical link
The Minnesota Department of Education and
The Minnesota Paraprofessional Consortium present

Tools for Making a Difference
12th Statewide Conference for Paraprofessionals in Education

April 30-May 1, 2004
Ridgewater College, Hutchinson, MN

Call for Presentations

The Minnesota Department of Education and the Minnesota Paraprofessional Consortium are seeking presenters to share strategies/insights which will help prepare paraprofessionals and those who support them to provide quality services to students. Presentations will be approximately 50 minutes in length and will be scheduled Friday evening and Saturday. Presentations may be scheduled more than once. Use this form to submit your proposal today! Or pass it on to a colleague who may be interested in presenting.

PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT NEATLY!

Session Title ____________________________________________________________

Session Description (please limit to 35 words) __________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________

Proposed Audio/Visual Needs

☐ Overhead projector with screen  ☐ Slide projector with screen  ☐ Flipchart or chalkboard
☐ TV/VCR  ☐ Other:

Intended Audience

☐ Paraprofessionals/Aides/Assistants/Direct Service Staff  ☐ Teachers
☐ Administrators  ☐ Parents  ☐ Other:

Presenter Availability (Presentations may be scheduled more than once.)

I/we can present...  ☐ Friday evening only  ☐ Saturday only  ☐ Friday or Saturday

Please complete reverse side!
Presenter Information (*Information will be used in conference materials)

Name*: __________________________________ Title*: __________________________________
Organization*: _________________________________________________________________________
Address: ______________________________________________________________________________
Phone: ___________________________ Fax: ___________________________
Email: ________________________________________________________________________________

Additional Presenters (*Information will be used in conference materials)

Name*: __________________________________ Title*: __________________________________
Organization*: _________________________________________________________________________
Address: ______________________________________________________________________________
Phone: ___________________________ Fax: ___________________________
Email: ________________________________________________________________________________

Name*: __________________________________ Title*: __________________________________
Organization*: _________________________________________________________________________
Address: ______________________________________________________________________________
Phone: ___________________________ Fax: ___________________________
Email: ________________________________________________________________________________

Please include a short bio for all presenters with this form.

Send proposals to:

**MAIL**
PPC Proposals  
c/o Conference Connections  
P.O. Box 81  
St. Michael, MN 55376

**FAX**
763.497.0248

**EMAIL**
nwalkercc@aol.com

Please include all information requested in this Call for Presentations

Proposals are due no later than **Monday, January 5, 2004** for consideration. Decisions will be finalized the week of January 12 and you will be notified if your session is selected.

If you have any questions, please contact Nikki Walker, Conference Connections, at 763.245.0464 or nwalkercc@aol.com.
This article provides excerpts of the introduction to and survey results of the Status Report II: Preparation and Supervision of Paraprofessionals in Minnesota Report, a study that reports on the Minnesota paraprofessional workforce in 2003.

This report provides the results of Minnesota’s most recent Statewide Paraprofessional Needs Assessment, conducted by the Minnesota Department of Education, Division of Special Education. This survey was conducted during the spring of 2003. This regular 3-year assessment provides information regarding state and local policies and practices related to paraprofessionals. Prior surveys were conducted in 1994, 1997, and 2000. In some cases, responses to similar questions are provided across these survey dates.

Since the last time this needs assessment was conducted many changes have occurred relating to paraprofessionals, their training and preparation, and their supervision. For example, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (NCLB) was enacted and provides three options for paraprofessionals to meet the requirements as stated here:

Option A. Complete at least two years of study at an institution of higher education;

Option B. Obtain an Associate’s (or higher) degree; or

Option C. Meet a rigorous standard of quality and can demonstrate, through a formal state or local academic assessment:

a. knowledge of and the ability to assist in instructing reading, writing, and mathematics, and

b. knowledge of and the ability to assist in instructing reading readiness, writing readiness and mathematics readiness as appropriate.

These requirements have broad impact as they apply to Title I instructional paraprofessionals in targeted assistance schools and all instructional paraprofessionals regardless of funding source in Title I school-wide programs.

In addition to these changes, this year the Minnesota Legislature gave the State Board of Teaching the authority to create rules for a credential process for all instructional paraprofessionals (Minnesota Regular Session Laws 2003, Chapter 129, Article 1 Section 10). The Minnesota Statewide Paraprofessional Consortium, in conjunction with the Minnesota Department of Education, will be working with the State Board of Teaching in the development of this rule. Below is the language intended to guide the development of the rule.

Sec. 10. [120B.363] [CRE-DENTIAL FOR EDUCATION PARAPROFESSIONALS.]

Subdivision 1.

[RULEMAKING.] The board of teaching must adopt rules to implement a statewide credential for education paraprofessionals who assist a licensed teacher in providing student instruction. Any paraprofessional holding this credential or working in a local school district after meeting a state-approved local assessment is considered to be highly qualified under federal law. Under this subdivision, the board of teaching, in consultation with the commissioner, must adopt qualitative criteria for approving local assessments that include an evaluation of a paraprofessional’s knowledge of reading, writing, and math and the paraprofessional’s ability to assist in the instruction of reading, writing, and math. The commissioner must approve or disapprove local assessments using these criteria. The commissioner must make the criteria available to the public.

Subd. 2. [TRAINING POSSIBILITIES.] In adopting rules under subdivision 1, the 2003 Status Report, continued page 6
board must consider including provisions that provide training in: students' characteristics; teaching and learning environment; academic instruction skills; student behavior; and ethical practices.

Subd. 3. [INITIAL TRAINING.] Within the first 60 days of supervising or working with students, a district must provide each paraprofessional with initial training in emergency procedures, confidentiality, vulnerability, reporting obligations, discipline policies, roles and responsibilities, and a building orientation.

In addition to this new legislation, it is important to acknowledge the following, which was enacted in 1998. Our last paraprofessional needs assessment survey in 2000 identified a baseline for Minnesota paraprofessionals regarding the following statute. This year we asked the same questions to see what difference might exist.

Through the guidance of the Minnesota Statewide Paraprofessional Consortium, core competencies for instructional paraprofessionals, specialized competencies, inventories, portfolio template, training materials, web-based training (Para eLink) and many other resources and tools have been developed to support the development of paraprofessionals. We hope you find information you can use to improve your system of personnel development to better meet the ever-changing needs of students and the paraprofessionals who work with them.

Survey Results from the 2003 Status Report

Survey Results: Job Description

The results provided in this section describe information about the respondents and their job situation: years as a paraprofessional, where they work geographically in Minnesota, the number of hours they work, the type of school and number of classrooms in which they work. It also provides general information about the students with whom the paraprofessionals work, such as age and setting.

Table 1 shows the number and percent of respondents and the length of time they reported working as a paraprofessional. Eighty-one percent of the respondents (557) implementing follow-up instructional procedures and activities; and

- A district wide process obligates each paraprofessional to work under the ongoing direction of a licensed teacher and, where appropriate and possible, the supervision of a school nurse.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience Working as a Para</th>
<th># of Responses (n)</th>
<th>% of Total N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1 year</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-9 years</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15 years</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 15 years</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total N</strong></td>
<td><strong>911</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
reported working between 4 and 15 years, while only 5% (42) paraprofessionals were in their first year.

Table 2 provides information about the geographical area where the paraprofessionals work. The responses provide a diverse representation across Minnesota.

Table 3 shows the number of hours that paraprofessionals reported working per week. Data are reported for each year the needs assessment survey was completed. There appears to be a subtle shift leading to increased hours. For example, in 1994 51% (452) of the paraprofessionals reported working from 31-40 hours a week while in 2003 63% (576) reported working the same amount of hours.

Table 4 provides a listing of the various areas in which the paraprofessionals work. Since paraprofessionals often work in more than one area, they were asked to choose all that apply, in other words, to choose all the areas in which they work. While the greatest numbers work in Special Education (78%, 716) and Title I (21%, 220), other areas are also represented.

To view the remaining survey results and see the actual survey, go to http://ici2.umn.edu/para.
Call for Nominations

Instructional Team of the Year

Now is your chance to nominate a positive instructional relationship for Paraprofessional/Teacher Instructional Team of the Year! Please include the following information —

Information

1. Names of the members of the Paraprofessional/Teacher Instructional Team
2. Where employed
3. Work address/phone
4. Number of years each member has been employed as a paraprofessional/teacher
5. Number, type, and age of students/clients served
6. Name of Nominator
7. Nominator’s address/phone

Qualifications or Experience

1. How this paraprofessional/teacher team exhibits a positive, effective working relationship including —
   • Clear and open communication
   • Respect for each other and students
   • Shared educational philosophy
   • Understanding of team role definition and expectations
2. Characteristics or qualities that set this team apart —
   • Contributions to the school/work environment
   • Differences made in the lives of students
3. Include statements of support from students, parents, teachers, administration, and/or peers

Paraprofessional of the Year

Now is your chance to nominate an outstanding person for Paraprofessional of the Year! Please include the following information —

Information

1. Name of Paraprofessional
2. Where employed
3. Work address/phone
4. Number of years as a paraprofessional
5. Number, type, and age of students/clients served
6. Name of Nominator
7. Nominator’s address/phone

Qualifications or Experience

1. Exemplary work skills such as —
   • Communicating effectively
   • Listening attentively
   • Taking initiative
   • Understanding his or her role in the school community/work setting
2. Unique characteristics —
   • Contributions to the school/work environment
   • Differences made in the lives of students or clients
   • Professional development
3. Include statements of support from students, parents, teachers, and/or peers

Applications accepted until March 1, 2004
Mail or fax this information to —

Teri Wallace, Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota, 111 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Drive SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455
Fax (612) 624-9344
The Governor of the State of Minnesota will proclaim the week of January 19-23, 2004, as Paraprofessional Recognition Week. In the past, districts have used many strategies to recognize the contributions of paraprofessionals who are essential to every school. Here are some that you may want to try:

- Encourage school staff to talk and visit with paraprofessionals and acknowledge their contributions.
- Send information home to parents and students acknowledging the role of paraprofessionals.
- Recognize your school's paraprofessionals with appropriate mementos of appreciation such as flowers, certificates, pins, etc.
- Construct a bulletin board at school on the various roles of the school's paraprofessionals.
- Have a gathering in the school district for parents, faculty and administration to recognize the contributions of paraprofessionals.
- Advertise in the school or district newsletter about Minnesota Paraprofessional Week.
- Acknowledge paraprofessionals' contributions through articles and/or write an article about several paraprofessionals.
- Invite local radio stations to broadcast the names of paraprofessionals, the schools in which they work, and their responsibilities in the classroom.
- Recognize one or two paraprofessionals each day, announcing their names and roles over the loudspeaker during the daily announcements.
- Announce and thank paraprofessionals within the classroom in front of the students.
- Organize an “Appreciation Lunch” for paraprofessionals served by teachers and administrators to be held during Minnesota Paraprofessional Week.

We also ask that you share this information with your staff. For further information on paraprofessionals and staff development opportunities, please visit our Web site at http://ici2.umn.edu/para.

Motivation and Reward
For paras, much of their motivation to work with students...
Find and Use Our Web Site
Even if You’re Not Internet Savvy

Are you concerned you will no longer be able to read ParaLink’s informative articles once it makes the switch to an Internet-only resource? Are you someone who does not have Internet access either at home or at work? Are you new to the Internet and unsure about how to navigate Web pages or use Web browsers? Are you unfamiliar with Internet lingo like the term “Web browser”?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, fear not. Accessing and learning about the Internet can be a fun, fast, and best of all a free process. If you do not currently use the Internet, then you are missing out on a wonderful resource. Where else can you learn about the latest statewide teaching initiatives as well as find hundreds of recipes for apple pie, all with the click of a button?

Accessing the Internet
If you are one of the individuals who do not currently have Internet access at home nor at work, where can you — a regular person — go to find locations that offer both computers and Web access?

Public Libraries
Everyone knows that libraries are great sources of information, but did you know that public libraries also offer free Internet access? To access the Internet at a public library usually only requires that you possess a library membership. Check with the information desk to see if you are required to sign a waiver, need your own password and account name, or if they require any additional information. You may also want to see if your library limits the amount of time you spend on the Internet terminal or if they require you to sign up for a block of time in advance.

Community Centers
The level of available service in community centers differs greatly. There is a possibility, however, that one near you offers Internet access. Additionally, these locations may also offer classes in how to use the Internet and tools for effective Internet searches.

Learning to Use Web Browsers and Surf the Internet
Now that you have located a place to access the Internet, how exactly do you get onto the Internet? If there are no instructions around the computer you are using, then you will have to follow these directions. First, you will need to open up a Web browser. The most commonly used Web browsers are Internet Explorer, Netscape Navigator, and Safari. Look for these programs on the computer you are using. If you are having trouble locating these programs, ask someone for help.

After you have located the Web browser, open the program by double-clicking on it. If you would like to learn more about the Web, you can find short, fun tutorials by typing this group of letters...
and symbols exactly as they appear into the address bar located at the top of the screen: http://www.learnthenet.com. Locate the “How To” section and click on the words “Surf the Web.” Here, you will find brief but informative tutorials on many different aspects of the Internet. If you click on “Web At-a-Glance,” you will learn Internet lingo like “URL” and “hyperlink.” If you click on “Web Browsers,” you will learn how to better use the program you are currently running (i.e. Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator) and the use for all of the buttons at the top of your screen.

Remember also to check out our Web site at http://ici2.umn.edu/para. Be sure to register your email to receive automatic Web updates. See you there!

Instructional paraprofessionals in Minnesota who must meet the definition of “highly qualified” by the January 2006 deadline have a number of options from which to choose. One of those options became clearer on December 1, 2003, as Commissioner Yecke selected a cut score for a state approved test. That state approved test is ParaPro, published by the Educational Testing Service. This test measures a candidate’s proficiency in math, reading and writing, and the ability to assist the instruction of math, reading and writing. The cut score selected, 460, is the product of a validation study conducted in September by 20 Minnesota paraprofessionals and Title I teachers, plus discussions with the Minnesota Paraprofessional Consortium. The 460 score puts Minnesota one point above the national median.

“I’m glad to have this option available to districts, who are already hiring paraprofessionals who meet the NCLB requirements,” said Barbara Jo Stahl, Minnesota Department of Education. “We now have provided multiple options for paraprofessionals to meet these new requirements. Some paraprofessionals are choosing to go back to college, but many others are participating in the staff development involved in building a portfolio using Para eLink. The ParaPro test adds another approach that is available for districts to use.”

To learn more about how your district can order the ParaPro test to use on site, visit http://www.ets.org/parapro/ippform.html.

More information about ParaPro can be found at http://www.ets.org. Questions about NCLB and paraprofessionals can be directed to Diane Cirksewa (651-582-8759) or Barbara Stahl (651-582-8659).

Congratulations to
Michele Rogers and Deb Johnson
Sartell Schools
2003 Paraprofessional/Teacher Instructional Team of the Year
No Child Left Behind
Paraprofessional Local Requirements

NCLB requirements for paraprofessionals are met by:

A: Two years of study at an institution of higher education; **Minnesota’s standard:** A minimum of 60 semester credits or the amount required to complete two years of full time enrollment as determined by the institution attended;

OR

B: An Associate’s degree; or **Minnesota’s standard:** An AA, AS, AAS (or higher) degree;

OR

C: A demonstration, through a formal state or local academic assessment:
   a. knowledge of and the ability to assist in instructing reading, writing and math; or
   b. knowledge of and the ability to assist in instructing reading readiness, writing readiness and mathematics readiness as appropriate.

Minnesota’s standard can be met one of three ways:

1. A passing score on an assessment from the state-approved list;*

   OR

2. Demonstrating all Minnesota Paraprofessional Core Competencies (1-8) by local district validation of a portfolio through: transferable work experience, college courses, work shops/conferences, Para eLink and demonstration of skill using Para eLink or a similar curriculum that focuses on recent training addressed in Competency 9 of Reading, Math and Writing.

   OR

3. A state-approved local assessment.**

* The ParaPro test (see page 11 of this issue of ParaLink) has been approved for statewide use. The cut score for ParaPro is 460.

** Criteria for Local Assessments: A local assessment must satisfy the following criteria, and be submitted to MDE for approval: Reliable, valid, accessible, objective, comparable to two years of higher education, and able to measure knowledge and ability to assist in instructing reading, writing, and math (or reading, writing and math readiness) in the language of instruction. Instructional paraprofessionals working in Title III funded districts must be proficient in written and oral communication skills in English and any other language used for instruction.
Paraprofessional Pockets of Excellence
Call for Nominations

The Minnesota Statewide Paraprofessional Consortium consists of educators, paraprofessionals, and representatives from various organizations dedicated to the improvement of education. The consortium was established by the Minnesota Department of Education to support training, development and dissemination of materials, and research activities that focus on enhancing, understanding, and facilitating the growth of paraprofessionals in Minnesota.

We are seeking nominations of schools that use effective strategies or practices for supporting, training, supervising, planning with, and retaining paraprofessionals. We are interested in finding and sharing these “pockets of excellence” with others who are searching for practices, strategies, or tools to enhance the capacity of the education team to provide effective services.

Why identify pockets of excellence?
The role of paraprofessionals is evolving. Increasingly they are becoming integral members of the educational team in meeting the needs of students. To increase the quality of educational services, paraprofessionals must be provided with support, training, and opportunities to be effective in their roles on the education team.

How are exemplary practices/strategies/tools identified?
The Minnesota Statewide Paraprofessional Consortium seeks nominations from students, family members, educators, and local, state, and national organizations of practices/strategies/tools that are considered exemplary. Nominated practices/strategies/tools should fit into one or more of the following three priority areas:

- **Personnel Practices/Strategies/Tools**: Process for hiring, training, advancing, and retaining paraprofessionals.
- **Collaborative Practices/Strategies/Tools**: Facilitation of collaborative relationships between paraprofessionals and teachers.
- **Role Practices/Strategies/Tools**: Enhancement, diversification, or recognition of paraprofessional roles (e.g. providing opportunities for non-instructional roles, committee assignments, etc.).

Upon nomination, schools will receive a guide which describes the selection process and criteria used to rate the applications. To determine exemplary status, the complete application will be assessed by a peer review group consisting of paraprofessionals and educators. School practices/strategies/tools identified as exemplary will be profiled and:

- Sent to all schools in Minnesota
- Published on the Paraprofessional Consortium Web site
- Used as the topic of state and national teleconferences

Please see other side for Pockets of Excellence Nomination Form.
Nomination Form
Paraprofessional Pockets of Excellence

Please complete the following information to nominate a school that you believe represents excellence in working with, supervising, training, and/or retaining paraprofessionals. Application reviews will take place in January 2004. We will then contact the school and inform them of the opportunity to continue the application process. The application will be rated in response to a set of criteria which will be included in the application guide.

Please contact Teri Wallace at the Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota (walla001@umn.edu or 612.625.6619, fax) with any questions or needs for assistance regarding the nomination and/or application procedure. This form is available in alternative format and languages upon request.

School Name __________________________________________________________________________
Street Address __________________________________________________________________________
City, State, Zip Code _____________________________________________________________________
Contact Name _______________________________ Email Address _____________________________
Telephone Number ___________________________ Fax Number ______________________________

On a separate sheet of paper, please briefly explain why you regard this school as exemplary in its work with paraprofessionals.

Please indicate the practices/strategies/tools you are nominating:

___ Personnel practices/strategies/tools for hiring, training, advancing, and retaining paraprofessionals. Please specify:
  ___ Recruiting     ___ Ongoing Training     ___ Interviewing     ___ Recognition
  ___ Hiring     ___ Advancement     ___ Evaluation

___ Collaborative practices/strategies/tools that facilitate collaborative relationships between paraprofessionals and teachers.

___ Role practices/strategies/tools that enhance, diversify, or recognize paraprofessional roles (e.g., providing opportunities for non-instructional roles, committee assignments, etc.).

Name of Nominator __________________________ Email Address _____________________________
Organization Name _____________________________________________________________________
Street Address __________________________________________________________________________
City, State, Zip Code _____________________________________________________________________
Telephone Number ___________________________ Fax Number ______________________________

Please send or fax this form to: Teri Wallace, Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota, 111A Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Dr SE, Minneapolis, MN, 55455. Fax: 612.625.6619.
Conferences

Mark Your Calendars Now for These Upcoming Conferences!

**Potpourri For Paraprofessionals and Providers**
February 21, 2004
St. Cloud Technical College, St. Cloud, Minnesota
Registration Fee: $30
This conference is for paraprofessionals, child care providers, respite care providers, foster care and school-age care providers, and others who care for children with special needs. Keynote speaker will be Carole Achterhof presenting 'It's Better to Crack up with Laughter than Crack up with Stress.' Breakout sessions include Depression in Children, ADHD, Power Stuggles, Sensory Integration, and Asperger's Syndrome. For more information, call Sue Martin at 320-202-1941 or toll-free at 1-877-251-7272.

**Tools and Strategies for Paraprofessional Staff Development**
March 1-2, 2004
St. Cloud Holiday Inn, St. Cloud, Minnesota
This conference, for trainers of paraprofessionals in Special Education, Title I, Vocational Education, English Second Language (ESL), Learning English Proficiency (LEP) and Indian Education, will provide quality tools and strategies for paraprofessional staff development to improve classroom instruction. Sponsored by the Minnesota Department of Education and the Minnesota Paraprofessional Consortium. For more information, visit [http://ici2.umn.edu/para](http://ici2.umn.edu/para) or contact Nikki Walker, Conference Connections, at 763-245-0464 or nwalkercc@aol.com.

**The 12th Annual Minnesota Paraprofessional Conference: Tools for Making a Difference**
April 30-May 1, 2004
Ridgewater College, Hutchinson, Minnesota
Registration Fee: $60 for Paraprofessionals, $150 for all others (Includes continental breakfast, lunch, and materials.)
Registration opens February 2, 2004!
This conference will provide paraprofessionals with the opportunity to learn about new and different strategies and insights that will help prepare them and those who support their work to provide quality services to students. Initiated by the Minnesota Department of Education, sponsored by the Institute on Community Integration (UCEDD), University of Minnesota; Ridgewater College; ECSU; MSEA; AFSCME; MVASNP; and Education Minnesota. For more information, visit [http://ici2.umn.edu/para](http://ici2.umn.edu/para) or contact Nikki Walker, Conference Connections, at 763-245-0464 or nwalkercc@aol.com.
2003 Paraprofessional of the Year, continued from page 9

comes from knowing they are helping others learn and making a difference in young developing minds. For Glenda, her motivation is simple: “Students’ smiles often keep me going,” she remarks. When I asked what was the most rewarding part of her job, Glenda paused, then replied, “You know that feeling you get when you give an anonymous gift and the person isn’t expecting it? It’s the same feeling of giving the student a special gift: they may not know what they are getting, but you know you were a part of it....Sometimes it’s not the big things that are important, but the individual successes of students — math problems or passing a test they were working hard on. Adding these small things together makes it worth it!”

Although Glenda is reserved when taking credit for her own work, it is obvious to see that her dedication, hard work, and outstanding communication skills are one great piece to a larger puzzle. She has persevered because her hard work is matched by a support system made up of the teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrative know-how of the Luverne Public School System. Glenda Schneekloth’s success truly is a team effort!

Do you know a paraprofessional, like Glenda, that deserves recognition? Or perhaps you know of a Paraprofessional/Teacher Team that is worthy of such honors. To nominate someone you know for one of these awards, see page 8 of this issue of Paralink. Deadline for applications is March 1, 2004.