Then and Now

When there is a shortage of teachers, the number of paraprofessionals increases. When there is a shortage of money, the number of paraprofessionals decreases. The evolution of the paraprofessional position ebbs and flows based on numerous factors, but the importance of the role grows substantially every day.

Paraprofessionals began working in classrooms nearly 50 years ago. They often prepared materials and supervised children in the lunchroom and on the playground. Many paraprofessionals began their roles in voluntary positions during times of extreme teacher shortage. Eventually, the value of the their work and teachers’ reliance on them moved the role into a paid position. In fact, training programs began to emerge to help paraprofessionals prepare for their many and diverse tasks. However, many training programs were also lost due to the absence of fiscal resources.

Today, paraprofessionals work with teachers and others to provide a broad array of services and supports to students. The stories in this issue of ParaLink tell you a bit about these roles while also celebrating their work and commitment. The recent report entitled, Status Report: Preparation and Supervision of Paraprofessionals in Minnesota, provides information about the responsibilities, training,
Paraprofessionals...a critical link

and supervision of 3,530 Minnesota paraprofessionals. It reports on the perspectives of these paraprofessionals in relation to the requirements of Minnesota paraprofessional legislation. If you haven’t read this report, you might consider obtaining a copy for your information as it provides a great deal of information regarding our state and the paraprofessionals who serve in our schools (see end of article for information about how to get it).

Noted above, there are legislative actions in place that address the role of the paraprofessional. Specifically, Minnesota law requires school boards to ensure that paraprofessionals who work with students with disabilities receive training for their roles. The law also requires school boards to ensure paraprofessionals work under the direction of teachers or other licensed staff. Policy should guide behavior, and that is happening with regards to paraprofessionals in Minnesota. Currently, more and more districts are providing meaningful training; however, as the report shows, more is needed for this invaluable workforce.

This ParaLink is intended to reflect the perspectives of just a few Minnesota paraprofessionals: their roles, challenges, and rewards. There is great deal of commonality in their views, which is all centered appropriately on “the kids.” Most of the paraprofessionals entered the profession as a result of their love for children and their desire for a flexible schedule to accommodate their children’s needs at home. Many of the paraprofessionals recognize the demands of the current society and its influence on children — demands that move from society, to families, to kids. These demands can, quite often, turn into stressors in children’s lives and complicate the learning environment of the classroom; a situation that paraprofessionals often address and strive to alleviate. Thankfully, all of the paraprofessionals also noted their excitement when they see children learn, feel proud, and enjoy school.

Please read on to hear their individual stories and realize the commitment and love that each of these individuals brings to their jobs and to the people with whom they work and teach.

Contributed by Teri Wallace, Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota
From Teacher to Paraprofessional

Progress Toward the Perfect Fit

by Juanita Gropetti

Over the years, I have worked with students from K–5. On a daily basis, I tutor students in math and reading, spending half-hour blocks with groups ranging from one to five students. In my role, I develop lesson plans with some input from teachers and find materials to support each lesson.

There are two major rewards of my job. First, I enjoy the camaraderie of adults in the educational field. I have enjoyed the training and continued learning of current curriculum strategies in the areas of math and reading. In addition, we have a great team of paraprofessionals in our Title 1 program that gives each other support and has a great time together. The teaching staff is also very supportive of our efforts.

The second major reward of this profession is that I love working with the children and watching them make progress. It’s great when the light shines in their eyes and they understand a new concept. They get that great big smile, develop a sense of confidence, and are, quite simply, very proud of themselves. Each day is different and exciting because with children you can always expect the unexpected. They have so much energy and offer such innocence each day.

They teach me to remember to be a child once in a while and to allow the adult in me to rest.

The most challenging aspect of my job is to keep my frustration and disappointment in balance. It’s difficult for me to work with some children and not see a lot of progress. I have to remind myself at times that I am just one hour of their day and must be content to do my very best with this time. There are many children who come from very difficult situations and I wish I could make it all better. This year, we also had many children of diverse cultures and languages, which is another new area that our team is looking to improve by learning better ways to meet their needs.

At the end of some days, I remind myself that the next day will be different. I think about what went well and, with some of the kids, what I need to change for the next day, rethinking how I can teach the same concepts differently. We have great resources as a team and work well with many of our teachers. If one of us has a down day, we share ideas and are ready for the next. I look at each group of students as a challenge and my goal is to improve their self-esteem by the end of the year.
Helping Students Make Sense of Their Days
A Paraprofessional’s Reflections

By Ann Heffelbower

Ever since I was a child, I have truly enjoyed being and working with children. As a young person, I could often be found teaching the neighbor children how to dance or sew, organizing them into my own little classes. Many years later after college, I served as a high school substitute teacher for math and English. And recently, when the youngest of my five children (twins) went to school, I began working as an instructional assistant in the White Bear Lake School District. For the past three years, I have been a paraprofessional in Special Education at Bellaire Elementary School.

I enjoy being a paraprofessional because I like working in the school and classroom. I enjoy the challenge of helping students who have different learning styles from the mainstream students, but who want to feel just as successful as their peers.

I begin each day by greeting students as they arrive at school. I work in the classroom, usually one-on-one with each student at different periods of time. I assist them in moving smoothly through their assignments. They might need visual directions, etc. I’ll watch them and take cues from them. Often, I have to think on my feet, being spontaneous and flexible. Most importantly, I let them make as many decisions as possible, so it is truly their work. I respect their individuality and encourage, compliment, and congratulate them. I also try to facilitate peer-social relationships during lunch, snack time, and recess. In general, I simply try to help the student make sense of his or her day.

The rewards come in watching the students learn and move towards independence. I feel a tremendous sense of satisfaction when a student beams a proud smile while being successful. At the end of the day, hearing a student offer a thank you or exclamation of, “Yes, I had a good day!” can make it all worthwhile.

Probably one of the biggest challenges I face is finding the reason for a problematic behavior. Often, the behavior is being used as a means of communication and the difficulty lay in figuring out the message being sent. There are several tactics that I have learned that assist me in responding to troublesome behaviors. Anticipating stressful situations for the students and helping to prepare them often avoids acting out. Another tactic is to help students understand social situations during the school day by explaining the activity’s purpose and the student’s role. Finally, finding creative ways to help the student solve or overcome obstacles to learning will reduce disruptive activity. One encouraging fact is that challenges from the day before can actually be useful in helping to find a way to avoid the same situation again.

The thing that keeps me going is a positive attitude and the thought that tomorrow is a new day — a fresh start! A sense of humor comes in handy too. In addition, I work with a great team at school and together we can tackle any situation.

One last thing I’d like to add is that creativity is truly appreciated by the students (whether it be in the form of stories, artwork, or the use of words and humor). Extra training, attending workshops and lectures, and reading about the disabilities the students face helps me to develop new ideas and sharpen my skills. In the end, I always remember my team. They are a valuable resource with many ideas and experiences and we accomplish so much when we work together!
What Have I Gotten Myself Into?

By Myrna Engelke

I have always been a “Jack of all Trades.” I have worked for an insurance company and a daycare center, drove school bus, worked as a seamstress, helped my husband with his business, and did volunteer work in my church, at the school, and with the Girl Scouts. One day, a friend called me and said the school was planning to hire another paraprofessional. I applied and was hired, but I didn’t know what I had gotten myself into!

Our days are very full and eventful. I work at Mahnomen Public School in the Mild to Moderate Mentally Impaired/Moderate to Severe Mentally Impaired program, basically with one young man, but I am trained to work with all the students. I attend to his basic needs, see that all aspects of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) are carried out to the best of his ability, do physical and occupational therapy under the direction of the therapists, and when he’s able, take him to the swimming pool. I also take my turn riding the special education bus, as required by the IEP.

Last year our department had a certified teacher and six paraprofessionals. It required all of us to work as a team to serve 10 very special children. We strove to make each child the best they could be. I am very proud to be able to contribute to such a caring group of individuals and the rewards are great! Being nominated for Paraprofessional of the Year by such a great team of coworkers this past year was a great surprise. The recognition was incredibly validating and I felt so honored to be appreciated by those that I admire and value so much. One of the greatest challenges of this job is trying to justify to the public why special needs children should be exposed to the public school system. It is also sometimes very difficult to understand why some parents expect the public school to meet the demands of their special child when they seem so unwilling to do the things they demand of others.

I consider it a privilege to have been a part of the lives of these “special kids.” Some evenings, I wonder how I managed to get through the day, but the next morning I dash off with high expectations for myself and the children I serve. It’s then that I know precisely what I have gotten myself into, and it is wonderful.

Artwork by a student from the classroom of Karen Kroells and Ruth Holthusen, Para/Teacher Team of the Year (See the story on page 8).
Para of the Year, 2001
Judy Spears: Grandma, Mother, Teacher, and Friend

"You're lucky to catch me at home, so you'd better do this now," was Judy Spears' reply when I phoned to ask if I could schedule an interview. I scrambled for my pen, and we began. By the end of the conversation, I understood why I needed to grab my opportunity.

Judy Spears is one busy woman who devotes almost all of her time to children. With six children of her own, three foster children, and 32 grandchildren, Judy and husband Greeting have rarely had an empty house or quiet hour. In addition, her home is considered a retreat for several of the children in the neighborhood and Judy is always prepared to offer snacks, games, and a place to relax. She enjoys the fact that kids are comfortable in her house and offered with a note of contentment, "We once had 26 kids staying at our place. Our house is the hangout."

In addition to spending time with her family and the neighborhood children, Judy has also been working as a paraprofessional at Ponemah Elementary School for the past 26 years. When asked what motivated her to maintain such a child-centered schedule, Judy replied simply:

"I guess you have to love kids to work with them." And she clearly does.

During her years at Ponemah, Judy has worked with children from kindergarten up through high school in the capacities of tutor, mentor, cultural liaison, classroom observer, confidant, disciplinarian, and counselor. Her cooperating teacher from the past year, Shelly DeJean, stated: "[Judy's] consistency and nonjudgmental attitude has enabled students with the most difficult of behaviors to feel secure, safe, and make appropriate choices to be successful. If a child's well-being and learning is at stake, one can be confident that Judy will be there to advocate for the child."

Judy not only assists and advocates for students, but also helps teachers, counselors, paraprofessionals, and parents to understand each other and the culture in which they are working. According to Bonnie Hand, a special education teacher at the school, "Judy is always willing to answer questions about the Native American culture and help non-Native staff understand about traditions in the community. She is a great liaison with the community."

One of the biggest challenges of her job is knowing that some students have a tough time at home. In these situations, she is caring and careful, letting students know that things should not be that way, but also reminding them that people make mistakes and need to be understood. She encourages students to have hope that things will get better. When she is truly challenged by behavior, she tries to observe the student carefully and avoid triggers.

At the end of the day, Judy maintains her energy by thinking about the kids. "Children are hilarious. They are listening and paying attention at all times and will say the honest truth."

Judy Spears, continued page 12
Para of the Year, 2001
Mary Ann Holtzleiter: One Day at a Time, One Child at a Time

When asked, “Why are you a paraprofessional?” Mary Ann Holtzleiter says simply, “I love kids!” This one statement sums up the dedication that has driven her nearly 22-year career of serving students in the Minneapolis school district as an educational assistant. The results of this dedication are evidenced through the high level of praise generated by many students, parents, and colleagues, which culminated in her being co-recipient of the Paraprofessional of the Year award. This honor was awarded to her in the presence of her peers, from all over the state, at the annual Minnesota Paraprofessional Conference held at Ridgewater College in Hutchinson, MN on May 5, 2001.

Mary Ann began her career in the Minneapolis schools on a part time basis in 1979 doing hearing screenings. In 1985, she began working full time as an educational assistant for the district. Longfellow School was her home school from 1982 until 1991. Restructuring of the preschool programs in 1991 brought her to Pillsbury Math, Science, and Technology (MST) Elementary School in northeast Minneapolis to work in the Early Childhood Special Education classroom, where she’s been ever since. Mary Ann was impressed from the start with the dedication of the teachers she has had the opportunity to work with over the past 22 years. Their model of service has been reflected in the fine educator that Mary Ann has become.

A Day in Mary Ann’s Life
Pillsbury School is an early start school, which means Mary Ann arrives at 6:40 every morning for bus duty. Riding the bus with the students means that she is the first person the children see at the start of their school day and the last one they see as they wave goodbye. She helps build the important homeschool connections and makes sure that each student both starts and ends their school day safely and with a smile on their face.

The positive climate at Pillsbury School adds to Mary Ann’s positive attitude about her vocation. True collaboration and teamwork permeate the environment. Parents and other visitors often comment that they cannot tell the difference between the teachers and the assistants because each staff member’s main focus is on the development and care of the students. In addition to working in the classroom, Mary Ann contributes as needed in IEP meetings, problem solving, and planning. The mutual respect and admiration between teachers and assistants is evident as Mary Ann talks of her colleagues. This positive environment is a result of true team effort in every sense of the word.

Although the Paraprofessional of the Year award was one of the highest honors she has received, when talk turns to the award she always includes the thousands of other paraprofessionals that are equally deserving of this recognition. In Mary Ann’s words, “Educational assistants are a hard working and dedicated group of people and

Mary Ann Holtzleiter, continued page 12
Para/Teacher Team of the Year, 2001
Karen Kroells and Ruth Holthusen

Keys to Success: a Smile, a Laugh, and a Slice of Toasted Bread

Honored, excited, and appreciative — just a few words that express the feelings that Karen Kroells and Ruth Holthusen experienced when nominated and chosen as Minnesota Para/Teacher Team of the Year. “Being nominated by peers was an honor in and of itself, and when we were informed that we had been selected, we were elated and thrilled.”

While the recognition of being the Para/Teacher Team of the Year was a surprise and honor, Karen and Ruth clearly consider every day to be its own reward. “From the first day that we began working together, we felt a common bond and friendship with each other and the children in our kindergarten classroom.”

When looking back on her professional career, Karen stated, “I have always enjoyed the honesty, enthusiasm, and excitement of children. I love my job and each day is rewarding and fulfilling.” Karen has worked in special education and Title I programs at Sibley East School for six years and has worked as a paraprofessional in the kindergarten classroom for the past four years. Before becoming a paraprofessional, Karen was a daycare provider in her home and also became a director of a state licensed daycare center. Children have always been a major motivator and focus for her.

Ruth, too, has been working with or serving children for her entire professional career. She has been at the Sibley East Schools for the past 12 years and most of her teaching experience has been in the kindergarten and/or early childhood special education classrooms. Before finishing her teaching degree, she was an owner/director of a private preschool. Of her experiences, Ruth said, “No two days are alike, which is part of the fulfillment and adventure in the work I do. The candor, the wit, the genuineness and continual sense of wonder in the eyes of children never ceases and always amazes and rewards me.”

At Sibley East School, Karen and Ruth have an all
Together, We Are Better
The NRCP in collaboration with the Minnesota Paraprofessional Consortium

Call for Presentations

Together, We Are Better
This year, the NRCP (National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals) conference, originally scheduled for May 2-4 in Washington, D.C., is being combined with the Minnesota Statewide Paraprofessional Conference, and is now being held in Bloomington, Minnesota. Attendance is expected to approach 1,400. This includes paraprofessionals and those who support their work in Minnesota and around the nation.

Who Can Present?
The Minnesota Statewide Paraprofessional Consortium and the NRCP are seeking presenters to share strategies/insights which will help prepare paraprofessionals and those who support them to provide quality services to students in the new millennium. This year, we are especially interested in the following topics, but as always, we encourage proposals that expand horizons —

Statewide or local initiatives to set standards and parameters for —
• Paraprofessional roles in various staffing arrangements and program areas.
• Hierarchies of skill and knowledge competencies required to work in different levels of paraprofessional positions.
• Training and professional development opportunities for paraprofessionals.
• Development of effective partnerships among provider agencies, 2- and 4-year colleges, unions, and other stakeholders.
Emerging roles for paraprofessionals in occupational, speech/language, physical therapy, and other disciplines.

Incentives for retaining a skilled paraprofessional workforce (e.g., career pathways, credentialing flexible degree programs, collaborative articulated systems between provider agencies and 2- and 4-year colleges).

Standards and professionally developed models for preparing teachers and other supervisors to work effectively with paraprofessionals and direct service providers in education and other human services.

Hands-on sessions specifically designed to strengthen the on-the-job performance of paraprofessionals working in home- and center-based early childhood programs, inclusive classrooms, ALS/bilingual education, Title I programs, and vocational/transitional services.

Dates and Locations
This conference will be held on May 2-4 (Thursday, Friday, and Saturday morning) at the Radisson South hotel in Bloomington, Minnesota, which is approximately 20 minutes south of Minneapolis.

Conference Structure
Typically, the length of a session is 1 hour. However, if you require more than 1 hour, please indicate your time preference.

Registration Fees
The conference registration fee is $150, with a special rate of $60 for paraprofessionals.

Important Notification: Because the conference is self-sustaining, it is necessary for all presenters to register and pay the fee.
Together, We Are Better Call for Presentations

Please Submit the Following Information —

Description
A 500-word description of the proposed session.

Workshop Title and Brief Abstract
Limit to 50-75 words. This information will be used in the conference program should your proposal be accepted.

Intended Audience
- Paraprofessionals/Assistants
- Teachers
- Teacher Educators
- Administrators/Policymakers
- Faculty in Community Colleges
- Researchers
- Higher Education Faculty
- Related/Support Services
- Adult Serves Staff
- Parents
- General
- Other ______________________________

Audio/Visual Equipment
Please check which A/V equipment you will need —
- Overhead projector
- Flipchart or Chalkboard
- VCR and Monitor
- Slide projector
- Other ______________________________

Selection Process
Presentation will be scheduled on the basis of relevance to the conference target audience and balance of topics for the indicated tracks. You will be informed of your status by March 1, 2002.

Important Notification: Because the conference is self-sustaining, it is necessary for all presenters to register and pay the fee.

Please send two copies of your presentation proposal form to —
Marilyn Likins
National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals
Utah State University
6526 Old Main Hill
Logan, UT 84322-6526
Phone: 435.797.PARA
Fax: 801.273.7026
E-mail: mlikins@uswest.net

Proposals must be submitted by
January 14, 2002
Thank you for your interest
Mark Your Calendars Now for These Upcoming Conferences!

**Potpourri For Paras and Providers**, February 9, 2002, St. Cloud Technical College. This is a regional conference for paraprofessionals, childcare providers, respite-care providers, school-age providers, and others who care for children with special needs. Speakers include Brian Siverson-Hall discussing “Anger in School Age Care” and Kristen Wheeler discussing “Early Childhood Mental Health” and “Behavior Management.” Registration fee: $25. For more information, call Sue Martin at 320-202-1941.

**MN CEC/CFL Special Educators Conference**, February 25-26, 2002, Earle Brown Heritage Center, Brooklyn Center, Minnesota. The Minnesota Council for Exceptional Children and the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning invite you to attend this year’s Special Educators Conference. For more information, contact Kristin Ludwig at 763-784-3146 or EKristinL@aol.com; or Jay McIntire, MN CEC President Elect and Conference Chair, at 763-784-3147 or jaymci1@aol.com.

**The Council for Exceptional Children’s Annual Convention and Expo**, New York, New York, April 3-6, 2002. This is the largest and most exciting professional development event designed for all those who work with students with special learning needs. Preconvention registration rates are available now. Get the latest information by visiting the CEC Web site: http://www.cec.sped.org/spotlight/nyc/ or contacting: CEC, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 20181-1589 (1-888-232-7733).

**News Flash!** The 10th Annual Statewide Conference for Paraprofessionals joins the 21st National Conference for Paraprofessionals: Together, We Are Better, now to be held in Bloomington, Minnesota, May 2-4, 2002 at the Radisson South hotel. The goal of this conference is to provide paraprofessionals with an opportunity to learn about new and different strategies to assist in their jobs and to network with other paraprofessionals. The registration fee for paraprofessionals is $60, and for other attendees is $150. This includes continental breakfast. For more information, visit the Minnesota Paraprofessional Consortium Web site at http://ici2.umn.edu/para or the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals Web site at http://www.nrcpara.org. Registration will begin in January, 2002.
asked what she considered to be the most rewarding aspect of her job, Judy replied with something that seems quite small: “When the kids can make it to the next break. Some kids are sad, some are angry. We just try to make it a good day for them. I am really glad when the kids go home happy.” Judy definitely pays attention to the little things and they, in turn, make a big difference. “I try not to go to work angry because the kids can tell. I like to go to work in a good mood because it pays off in the long run.”

And she is truly loved. In fact, most of the students at the school affectionately call her “Grandma.” Tanya Enns, a speech therapist at the school who has looked to Judy for support and advice, stated endearingly: “I now feel at home with my job at Ponemah Elementary School, and every morning I remember why when Judy Spears meets me in the hallway with a smile and the words ‘hello friend.’”

Toward the end of the interview, Judy paused for a moment, then said, “Listen. It’s quiet in the house now. Everybody must have left. This is strange.” For a woman who has spent most of her life raising, teaching, and caring for children, a quiet home must be a strange thing indeed. Realizing the rareness of the moment, I said my thanks and encouraged her to enjoy the peace, but knew she would soon be surrounded by grandchildren, children, and neighborhood kids. And nothing could make her happier.

Contributed by Angela Swanson, Editor of The ParaLink

Mary Ann Holzleiter, continued from page 7

they enjoy what they are doing. I am only one who represents all the others and they all deserve this honor.” Mary Ann believes adequately and competently trained paraprofessionals make a difference in children’s lives. As a mentor, Mary Ann has helped other educational assistants learn the process of creating and writing their own professional development plans and she enjoys working with her peers. But she would not give up her work with children as an educator. For her, the thrill of helping a child learn new skills, develop new abilities, and form a positive educational outlook is its own reward.

And that is exactly what keeps Mary Ann coming back to school – the children. Their smiles, their greetings, and helping them to like school. The rewards in her work dim any challenges she may encounter. These children, and hopefully many more children in the years to come, are fortunate to have Mary Ann Holzleiter laying a foundation in her own special way. Simply, one day at a time, one child at a time.

Contributed by Donna Patterson, Coordinator Minnesota Paraprofessional Training Project

Farewell

I would like to take this opportunity to wish the readers of the ParaLink a fond farewell. When I started working on this project, I had only a vague idea of what a paraprofessional was, let alone what he/she did. After a year of conversations, meetings, and conferences, I can say with all sincerity that I have developed a deep and lasting respect and admiration for your profession. It has been an honor working with and for you. You have influenced my thinking and future practice as I leave this place to pursue my career as an educator.

— Angie Swanson
day, everyday kindergarten schedule which allows them the time to do some extra, but also very important, activities. With the extra time, Karen and Ruth seek to meet not only the academic needs of students, but also look for ways to take care of the whole little person. One of the things that they do to meet student need is to run a “Toast Restaurant,” a practice that was conceived by Karen and Ruth in response to the fact that many of their students did not eat before they came to school. This simple morning snack has become a big success and contributes to the warm, cozy atmosphere in their classroom. This sense of home is readily visible in the artwork of some of the students from their class shown here (and on pages 5 and 8).

To address the academic needs of their students, Karen and Ruth use student learning stations. This allows them to work with students in smaller groups and enables the students to focus on a variety of activities, such as reading readiness, math, art, and fine motor skills.

“Seeing the progress and changes that the students make during a school year is very rewarding. Their sense of awe in all they discover and learn is probably the biggest challenge. They are so ready and eager for any learning situation we provide and no matter what we teach, they learn! The challenge is to provide content that is worthy of these precious minds” (Karen and Ruth). One effective way of meeting this challenge for the team has been to brainstorm together. In general, Ruth and Karen maintain a sense of perspective by keeping a sense of humor and laughing as often as possible: “Commitment to children, respect for each other and the children, and taking time for laughter and fun are some of the things that make our friendship and teamwork successful.”

What makes these two such a dynamic pair? Perhaps it’s as simple as a smile, a laugh, and a slice of toasted bread.

Edited by Angie Swanson

Artwork by a student in Karen and Ruth’s class.
A Salute to 2001’s Cream of the Crop!

Each year, the Minnesota Paraprofessional Consortium receives numerous nominations for Paraprofessional of the Year and Para/Teacher Team of the Year. It is a daunting task to read through all of the nominations and choose just one recipient because each nominee is truly exceptional. (Note: we ended up nominating two recipients this year because we had so much difficulty narrowing the field). In an effort to give the nominees some recognition and the opportunity to share their experiences, we have asked the following to contribute articles summarizing their reflections on their careers as paraprofessionals —

• Myrna Engelke, Mahnomen Public School, Mahnomen
• Ann Heffelbower, Bellaire Elementary, White Bear Lake
• Juanita Groppeti, Oakwood Elementary School, Plymouth

To acknowledge the other nominees for the year 2001, we are listing them here and wish to offer our sincerest thanks, applause, and appreciation for the services they provide to students throughout the state.

2001 Paraprofessional/Teacher Team of the Year Nominees
• Judy Olson and Rita Pfeiffer, Kenneth Hall Elementary School, Spring Lake Park
• A team of 13 teachers and paraprofessionals, Kingsland Elementary School, Spring Valley
• Jill Heath (1st-grade Teacher) and Amanda Millard (Special Education Paraprofessional), Tanglen Elementary School, Minnetonka

2001 Paraprofessional of the Year Nominees
• Tricia Atamian, Jefferson Elementary School, Rochester
• Joyce Bjerke, Oak Grove High School, North Oaks
• Phyllis Bopp, Oakwood Elementary School, Plymouth
• Hazel Burnside, Southwest High School, Minneapolis
• Debbie Dalton, Oakwood Elementary School, Plymouth
• Monica Dohrn, Zumbrota-Mazeppa Elementary School, Zumbrota
• Louise Feda, Long Prairie-Grey Eagle School District, Long Prairie
• Judy Hauck, Franklin Elementary School, Anoka
• Cheryl Hudson, School District 535 Care and Treatment Program/ Mayo Clinic, Rochester
• Holly Johnson, Wadena Deer Creek Schools, Wadena
• Sherri Leyda, Tanglen Elementary School, Minnetonka
• Gail Majzner, Oakwood Elementary School, Plymouth
• Margaret Martenson, MACCRAY West Elementary School, Maynard
• Kim Peterson, Reeds Gray Elementary School, Redwood Falls
• Danya Troxel, School District 916, White Bear Lake
• Marti Trussel, Oakwood Elementary School, Plymouth
• Shirley Vandenheuvel, Charles Lindbergh Elementary School, Little Falls
Nomination Reminders

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

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

Part 2
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

Para/Teacher Team of the Year
Please take the time and nominate a positive instructional relationship for new Paraprofessional/Teacher Instructional Team of the Year award! Please include the following information —

Part 1
1. Name of the Para/Teacher Instructional Team
2. Where employed
3. Work address/phone
4. Number of years employed as a para/teacher
5. Number, type, and age of students/clients served
6. Name of Nominator
7. Nominator’s address/phone

Part 2
1. How this para/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.

Applications accepted until March 29, 2002
Mail or fax this information to —
Robin Spanier, Institute on Community Integration,
University of Minnesota, 111 Pattee Hall,
150 Pillsbury Drive SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455,
Fax (612) 624-9344
Paraprofessionals...a critical link

Images from Paras Touch Kids’ Lives • 2001 Minnesota Paraprofessional Conference