

(May 12, 2005) TRIBUTE TO SIX HONOREE TEACHERS OF ST. RICHARD SCHOOL

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MR. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of six exemplary veteran teachers who have combined experience of over 166 years in the teaching profession. In April these six teachers were honored with the Heart of St. Richards Parish award because of the positive influences they contribute to students, families, and the whole community of St. Richards Parish. Today, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring these teachers for their outstanding commitment to our nation's youth. They stand as a symbol of the positive influences that teachers contribute to students every day across this great country.

The first teacher I am privileged to recognize is Mrs. Kathleen Riordan Pona who began teaching in 1959 with a class of 51 energetic second grade students. Mrs. Pona has served with 4 pastors and 7 principals who have helped her build the foundation that has continued the road of success at St. Richards School. Her 43 years of teaching is a shining light for teachers around the country who are beginning their careers in teaching and struggling to bring success to the classroom on an annual basis. This nation is indebted to Mrs. Pona and teachers like her who have made teaching their first love.

Miss Joann Gaus began her teaching career in 1969 at St. Richards School and continually requested new opportunities inside and outside of the classroom to benefit the lives of her students. Miss Gaus had the honor of taking an active part in the parochial education of her students preparing them for both Communion and Reconciliation. She has been a team leader in the teaching profession by being a coordinator for nearly every subject area and representing her fellow faculty members at meetings within the Archdiocesan Council.

Another outstanding teacher is Ms. Josephine Granat who has graciously and excitedly served her students for 32 years in teaching and 17 years at St. Richards. Her concern for her students is matched by the excitement and energy that she brings into the classroom. St. Richards is proud and lucky to have such a great teacher continuing her career at their institution of learning.

Mrs. Rita Zbella is currently in her 29th year of teaching at St. Richards School, where she came and taught in 1976. Mrs. Zbella has proven to be an essential asset to St. Richards where she is currently teaching the computer class, which ranges from 3-year-old preschoolers to 8th grade junior high students. Her commitment to her family and profession is representative of the sacrifices teachers make every day in their lives.

Mr. Frank Trapani has been a teacher for 28 years, dedicating 20 of those years at St. Richards teaching religion and social studies. Individuals like Mr. Trapani enjoy the feeling of community, connection, brotherhood and sisterhood, and culture that a teacher receives when teaching at a parochial school. As a teacher Mr. Trapani enjoys the privilege of being able to know his students, their parents, and the community that make up St. Richards Parish. He is truly grateful to have been able to dedicate his life to the teaching profession.

Finally, it is an honor to give praise to Mrs. Pamela Toppings, who began her teaching career in 1984 and has dedicated 21 years to St. Richards School. Her career is a promising one and her experience with St. Richards has been rewarding. St. Richards is fortunate to have a quality teacher as shown by Mrs. Topping's dedication and hard work.

I am honored today to pay tribute to six wonderful and dedicated teachers who have shown quality service to a great institution, St. Richards School.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Kathleen Riordan Pona, Joann Gaus, Josphine Granat, Rita Zbella, Frank Trapani, Pamela Toppings, and the parish of St. Richards for the many years it has provided services to the community and wish them the very best in the years yet to come.