

2008 / 2009

FIRST FREEDOM TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARD



PAULA TATE

Draughn High School
Valdese, North Carolina

Paula Tate is a social studies and civics teacher at Draughn High School in Valdese, North Carolina. She is in her ninth year of teaching. Ms. Tate brings to the classroom a contagious excitement for history and civic engagement. Mr. Mike Kenney, Draughn High School principal, noted: “She makes class interesting by making it relevant to the students’ lives.” Students further commented that “relevance” helps them apply their learning outside of the classroom. For example, instruction during the presidential election extended its influence well beyond the school house, as students and parents sat down together to watch the debates and engage in family discussion—an activity that also re-energized parents’ civic involvement. Inside and outside of the classroom, Ms. Tate teaches and exemplifies respect for the diversity of America’s heritage and the value of all of its citizens. Also as Key Club advisor, she has rallied a large and active group of students who enthusiastically look for and support worthy community causes. In her commitment to education and Draughn students, Ms. Tate opted to give up her planning period to make an additional civics class available. Students likewise commend her for the extra time she gives to them individually to help them understand their work, recognize their potential, and rise to it.

Ms. Tate is also the proud mother of two young sons, ages three and 18 months old.

The success of the First Freedom Student Competition and its positive educational impact on students hinges on the participation and support of the teachers—critical actors in getting students involved. For that reason, we recognize one of the most outstanding teacher sponsors. Our teacher recognition is determined through student nominations, competition participation numbers, and interviews with the principals. The \$500 award is given to an educator who excels in making learning relevant and interesting, who advances student appreciation for and involvement in the community, and who helps students become independent and articulate thinkers as they grapple with issues in the world. By inspiring students to reach beyond the classroom, teachers prepare students to become engaged and committed citizens.

