

Teacher lauded for math lessons

By NATALIA E. ARBULÚ
narbulu@repub.com

AGAWAM – Don't tell Janice A. DeFilipi's students that math can be difficult – they think it's fun.

The 28 fourth-graders who meet with DeFilipi each week create robots, solve brain-teasers and learn about such concepts as prime numbers and algebraic forms.

DeFilipi, an elementary English language arts specialist, is the teacher for the district's Project Specific Enrichment Education, an enrichment program for gifted children.

The Association of Teachers of Mathematics in Western Massachusetts, known as Mathwest, recently recognized DeFilipi as a Teacher of the Year for her outstanding contributions to mathematics education.

Tricia Lynn, president of Mathwest, said

the association's board of directors was impressed by DeFilipi's involvement in various activities both in and out of the classroom.

"Many board members have worked with Janice personally and are always impressed by her enthusiasm, mathematical knowledge and her ability to integrate other sub-

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Agawam teacher Janice A. DeFilipi, back, stands with fourth-graders at Granger School. Front to back, from left, are Mark A. Johnson, Shayne C. Castonguay, David S. Gage, Andre P. Bernat, Daniel J. Lavoie, Megan L. Dustin and Marissa N. Ewing.

Staff photo by DON TREEGER



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jects, like reading, writing, and science, into her classroom," Lynn said.

DeFilipi was nominated by parent Mark Vatousiou, a local teacher, who said DeFilipi's lessons helped his children with their math skills years after they left fourth grade.

DeFilipi said she was honored and humbled to receive the award because she knows "many colleagues who are excellent teachers who deserve awards and work very hard."

The enrichment program was started in Agawam 25 years ago by retired teacher Ann Bradford. DeFilipi took over the program in 2000.

DeFilipi said that the enrichment program used to focus solely on English language arts. She wanted to extend it to include math to meet state standards in the subject.

As DeFilipi introduced math problems and activities to children, she found they were enthusiastic about it and wanted to learn more.

DeFilipi's husband, Robert,

head of the math department at West Springfield Middle School, has guided her on what problems and activities to include.

DeFilipi said she integrates math into everyday activities. For example, students recently learned about measurement. They created paper airplanes based on measurements, flew them and tallied their results on Excel, a computer spreadsheet program.

Students in the program also participate in the Math League contest by taking a 30-problem exam.

"The kids love to learn and the more I introduce to them the more they want. I try to help them enjoy math, reading and writing," DeFilipi said.

Students in the program benefit from working with other students who are also excited about learning, DeFilipi said.

DeFilipi is president of the Pioneer Valley Reading Council, an executive board member of the Massachusetts Reading Association and a member of the International Reading Council.

She and her husband have two grown children.