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Terre Haute South teacher receives national recognition

Sue Loughlin
The Tribune-Star

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TERRE HAUTE — A Terre Haute South Vigo High School teacher has received national recognition for his efforts in technology education.

Marquis Songer was one of 34 teachers recognized with the "Teacher Excellence Award" at the 73rd annual International Technology and Engineering Educators Association Conference in Minneapolis.

About 600 technology and engineering educators from across the United States attended the award ceremony last month.

"Marquis is a great teacher," said Doug Dillion, Vigo County schools director of career and technical education. "He is the kind of teacher you want your kid to have in school."

Those who earn the award go through a rigorous evaluation process, he said.

Songer teaches in the advanced manufacturing and S.T.E.M. (science, technology, engineering and math) career pathways. One of his most popular classes is computers in design and production, in which students explore different types of new and emerging technologies.

He began teaching in the Vigo County School Corp. in 2003 and has been at Terre Haute South for all but one year.

Dillion said Songer frequently works at school until 9 p.m. "He would do anything for kids," Dillion said.

He was the original teacher of a summer youth manufacturing camp, which involved work with high-risk students, "Marquis not only volunteered, he did it with enthusiasm," Dillion said.

When new, high-tech equipment becomes available, he wants to learn how to use it so he can offer more opportunities to his students, Dillion said. "He is always willing to go above and beyond."

Songer "thrives on learning anything new and on what he can create with students and accomplish with students," Dillion said. "He believes in challenging every kid to the best of their ability."

Songer, who was nominated by the Engineering/Technology Educators of Indiana, said it's nice to be

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recognized about what he wants the focus to remain on students. "I'm a person who has never liked attention. I like to do what I do behind the scenes," he said. "I don't think any teacher goes out to win awards."

Songer said he tries to build good rapport with students. "If you build good rapport with kids and get them to buy in to what you'll tell them, then the subject comes easier," he said.

In building that rapport, he's known to "goof around" with his students, he said. "Somehow, I've been able to get across when it's time to have fun, we have fun. When it's time to be serious, we get serious," he said.

He always has music in his class. "I can't stand dead silence. It drives me nuts. I think a lot of kids feel the same," he said.

The main reason students take his class is because "they want to do something or create something," he said. In his class, they learn by doing. "I try to have them up and moving quite a bit," he said.

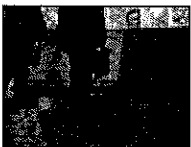
He's been involved with the Link Crew freshman mentoring program and he has taught adult work force development courses.

Teachers nominated for Teacher Excellence Awards must demonstrate:

- Exemplary teaching characteristics including subject-matter competence, enthusiasm for teaching, sensitivity to student learning needs and good communication skills.
- Sustained professional growth.
- Ability to foster curiosity and generate excitement about learning.
- A conviction that all students should and can learn about technology and engineering and apply its principles in everyday life.
- An experimental and innovative attitude in their approach to teaching.
- Professional involvement and leadership.

Songer is a 2001 graduate of Purdue University and has a bachelors degree in industrial technology.

Sue Loughlin can be reached at (812) 231-4235 or sue.loughlin@tribstar.com.



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