

Educator earns excellence award

By Richard Rolke - Vernon Morning Star

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A Coldstream teacher has been recognized for her efforts to take students out of the classroom and introduce them to the world around them.

On Monday, Sharon Mackenzie received the Premier's Award for Teaching Excellence during a ceremony in Victoria.

"I am really honoured," said Mackenzie, an educator for 26 years who teaches Grades 5 to 7 at Kidston Elementary.

Mackenzie is perhaps best known for a program that links her students with seniors at the Coldstream Meadows retirement residence, while she has also encouraged them to improve the environment by cleaning up garbage along Vernon Creek.

She has also created job-shadow opportunities so students can learn about future careers.

For Mackenzie, hands-on learning is important.

"Unless we are educating them in the world itself, they will go out there without the skills they need," she said, adding that society has become compartmentalized and different ages don't interact.

"When you get young kids out in the community and they connect with people in the community, it improves it immensely."

As an example, Mackenzie says seniors and children are often forgotten and through art, writing and story-telling, they have been able to discover each other.

"It's a simple way of bringing generations together."

But while she is proud of her accomplishments, Mackenzie says she couldn't have done it without her family, students, parents and colleagues.

"I should have had a lot more people receive it (award) with me. When teachers do things they like, there's a whole entourage of people who help them get there," she said.

Besides a certificate of achievement, Mackenzie has received \$1,500 for professional development.

"It is great to see the ideas that Sharon has to engage her students in the learning process," said Tom Christensen, Okanagan Vernon MLA.

"Her dedication to her work is an inspiration, and shows the many possibilities available for teachers to help students grow and develop."



Okanagan Vernon MLA Tom Christensen congratulates Sharon Mackenzie for her teaching excellence award.