

# Education News & Notes

## Nation's Most Innovative Teachers Are Recognized

(NAPSA)—An award to teachers who are pioneers in developing new and innovative methods and techniques that improve student learning is getting high grades from communities across the nation.

The Unsung Heroes awards program recognizes kindergarten through 12th grade educators nationwide for their innovative teaching methods, creative educational projects, and ability to make a positive influence on the children they teach. Now in its ninth year, the program has awarded more than \$2 million to nearly 900 educators across the United States. This year's ING Unsung Heroes winners were selected from a group of nearly 1,500 educators, the second-largest number of applicants in the program's history.

One of this year's winners is Joe Charles, a teacher at Apache High School in Apache, Okla., who has been recognized as one of the nation's most innovative educators in the 2004 ING Unsung Heroes awards program. Among 100 initial \$2,000 award winners, Charles was selected to receive the program's top prize of an additional \$25,000 for his "Independent Student Theatre" program. In recognition of Charles' grand prize award, Gov. Henry declared Sept. 9, 2004, as "Joe Charles Day" in Oklahoma.

The students at Apache High



**Teacher Joe Charles has been recognized as one of the nation's most innovative educators.**

School, with the help and guidance of Charles, have built an "Independent Student Theatre" program that allows students to have drama performances at the school. With no auditorium at the school but with the desire to start an extracurricular drama program, students secured a sizable room and the permission to transform it into a theatre. The students relied on personal means to provide all necessary materials, labor and time to work on the project after school and on weekends. Complete with seating for 70 people, an elevated stage, dressing room, wardrobe and property storage, a lighting, sound and video-record-

ing system, the Apache High School Drama Group now presents two full productions each year. Participation in drama activities is directly tied to improved academic performance, self-confidence and teamwork skills. Thanks to the determination of today's students, future generations of Apache students can enjoy the opportunity to participate in theatre activities. Charles is a resident of Apache.

"We strongly believe in supporting our nation's educators, both in their professional and personal lives," said Bill Jasien, Senior Vice President of ING U.S. Financial Services. "So many teachers consistently go above and beyond to meet the needs of their students, and ING is committed to helping these Unsung Heroes as they continue to inspire and engage their students."

In order to be considered for an ING Unsung Heroes award, educators must submit applications describing projects they have initiated or would like to create in their schools. Winners are selected based on project innovation, creativity and the ability to make a positive influence on the children they teach. The deadline each year is near or around April 30. Winners are announced in the fall.

To learn more about the program or to get an application for 2005, go to [www.ing.com/unsungheroes](http://www.ing.com/unsungheroes).