

Bring The Spirit Of Thanksgiving To The Classroom

November 22, 2004 1:03 AM ET

Wright, Wyo. (November 22, 2004) - When Greg Schaefer, Arch Coal's vice president for public affairs, western region, thinks about Thanksgiving, one of the many things he's thankful for is that Wyoming is blessed with excellent classroom teachers.

"Recently, I saw two nominations for the company's teacher recognition program that were particularly heartwarming. These teachers are representative of those we see nominated each day," Schaefer said. "I am pleased that Wyoming has such professionalism in its classrooms. I think everyone should recommend a great teacher for an Arch Coal Teacher Achievement Award."

Arline Burrige, an elementary school teacher at Tongue River Elementary School in Ranchester, was nominated by her co-worker, Gwen Kepley, who is a paraeducator in her classroom. "Mrs. Burrige has been an instructor in elementary special education for more than 30 years," says Kepley. "She has seen many of her students become successful, productive citizens.

"In 1984, my son was identified as having special needs in the fourth grade," says Kepley. "Arline immediately made him feel welcome and secure and he began to believe he could become whatever he wanted. Just a few years later he was able to exit the program, and he is one of her success stories!"

Several years later, Kepley became an employee of the same school district and was assigned to Burrige as her paraeducator. "Now I feel like I am one of Arline's success stories, too," says Kepley. "With Arline's mentoring and encouragement, I went back to school and received a certification for para education. With her support, I won the first Outstanding Paraeducator's Award in Region 5 this year."

About a two hours' drive south, in Evansville, Melissa Newport wrote a moving nomination for Suzie Mayhue, a teacher at Evansville Elementary.

"I have four children," says Newport. "My daughter Shaylynn first met Mrs. Mayhue when she taught pre-school at another school. My daughter did very well there and I strongly believe it was because of Mrs. Mayhue's talents.

"When we moved during the summer, Shaylynn was upset that she wouldn't see Mrs. Mayhue again," reports Newport. "When we enrolled her in Evansville, we were very pleasantly surprised to see that Mrs. Mayhue had changed jobs and now was at that school.

"Not only would one daughter be reunited with her pre-school teacher, but we soon discovered that my oldest daughter would have Mrs. Mayhue as her teacher. Suzie Mayhue is a very wonderful, delightful, intelligent, dedicated and respectful teacher," says Newport. "Teaching is more than a 'job' for her. She has a passion for teaching. She cares about each student.

"Parents as well as students know they can talk with her," explains Newport. "She doesn't mind doing whatever it takes to help her students achieve at high levels. I feel she is the best teacher I have ever met."

Nomination forms are available in schools throughout the state, in MiniMart and Taco John's locations and available on the Internet at www.archteacherawards.com. The nominations close Jan. 15, 2005, but Schaefer recommends nominating teachers now, so that they will have more time to complete the application forms.

Arch Coal makes unrestricted cash awards to 10 deserving teachers. Since the program began, 40 teachers have been recognized.

In addition to the support of Taco John's and MiniMart, the program is backed by the governor's office, Department of Education, and the Wyoming Education Association.

Arch Coal is the nation's second largest coal producer and employs approximately 850 people in Wyoming. In 2003, Arch Coal's Wyoming operations produced nearly 90 million tons of clean-burning, low-sulfur coal. The company's Black Thunder operation in Campbell County is one of the largest and most efficient coal mines in the world. Arch Coal is traded on the New York Stock

Exchange (NYSE: ACI) and maintains its corporate headquarters in St. Louis, Mo.