



## **EVA COOK JONES EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR AWARD 2011**

Eva Cook Jones was a pioneer in special education. In 1954, as a young graduating college student, she started the first classroom at St. Cloud State University for students with Cerebral Palsy. She began with no books, no materials, and no lesson plan.

Through her determination and hard work, she successfully brought students into her classroom who had not had the opportunity to attend school in the past because of their disability. Fifty years later, we brought those students and Eva together to honor her work and their successes. Without her efforts, many of these students would have lived a life of dependence without an education. Instead, many of them went on to successful careers and independent lives.

UCP recognizes that what Eva Cook Jones did for children with cerebral palsy has been enormous. We witnessed this at our fiftieth anniversary celebration when we published the history of UCP of Central Minnesota. Some of her very first students were “singing her praises” fifty years after they had her as a teacher. We knew then that she was a very special person.

In recognition of her impact on students with cerebral palsy, we decided to recognize educators who have made an impact on the lives of their students with special needs. We were looking for that “special someone” who went “above and beyond” in their field. We also recognized that everyone who works with students with special needs goes above and beyond in some way. Tonight we recognize that special

person for 2011, Darrin Martinson, a band teacher at Sartell Middle School.

Nominated by a parent, Willie Moos, and her daughter, Jacqueline Erickson, Darrin was selected as our 2011 Educator Of The Year. According to Willie, Darrin is an excellent teacher and he went “above and beyond” in meeting the needs of a diverse learner.

Here is what Willie mentioned in her nomination of Darrin:

“Last January or February, my daughter, Jacky, started making noises about quitting band. She was frustrated and a bit overwhelmed with the physical demands of playing her clarinet, and having a hard time keeping up with the rest of her class. As a music major, with first-hand knowledge of the benefits of music and performance on academic success, I played the role of Tiger Mom, and refused to let her quit.

I started going to every one of her band classes, as well as to her small group lessons. At the first lesson I attended with Mr. Martinson, we talked about her frustration and lack of confidence in playing and producing a good sound. Mr. Martinson took the time to see what was happening as she was placing her fingers on the various holes and valves. The first thing he noticed was her difficulty in completely covering the open holes; she has very small fingers, and her spasticity further prevented her from covering and keeping covered the holes. He said he would look into what he could find out for her.

The next lesson, he talked to us about a “plateau clarinet”, that has no open holes, and that would probably be easier to play. He indicated that he was looking around to find one. Later, he said he had found one, that they are fairly rare, and that it was being repaired at a local

shop. He asked if we were interested in pursuing it, and we jumped at the chance.

Not only did he make the instrument available for Jacky, he convinced our current rental company to purchase the plateau and replace it, at no charge, on our rental/purchase agreement.

There was an immediate improvement in Jacky's interest and ability to play. She began practicing almost daily with her PCA, and it was clear that her skill was significantly improved with the modified instrument. In fact, when one piece was cut from their Spring Concert, Jacky was very disappointed, since she was one of only a few who could actually play her part!

She went on to continue in the summer marching band program, performing in several parades with the band. She is looking forward to another year in band; a complete turnaround from the child who hated going to band and wanted to quit.

Mr. Martinson is not a special ed teacher. He took the time to figure out what was going on with Jacky, and find a solution. He went further and found a source for that solution, and facilitated getting it into her hands. He didn't need any special training to help out a kid with Cerebral Palsy. He just evaluated and found a solution for her. In doing so, he has truly impacted Jacky's life. He wasn't deterred by her physical limitations; his love for music and teaching propelled him to find a way to enable Jacky to continue with band, and remain a 'normal' kid in 6<sup>th</sup> grade band. Not an easy task, but he made it look easy.

I believe Mr. Martinson embodies and exemplifies the qualities and dedication that Eva portrayed. He is our nomination for the Eva Cook Jones award, and we are proud to nominate him as such.”

Darrin Martinson, UCP is happy to honor you this evening with the 2011 Eva Cook Jones Educator of the Year Award. Willie & Jackie, could you come forward and help us present this award.

(Eva Cook Jones Educator of the Year Award 2011)