

## Four APS Golden Apple Winners Honored at Luncheon Friday

Elementary school teachers **Ulrike Kerstges**, **Theresa Sandoval**, **Jeff Tuttle** and **Cristal Dawn Wilson** earned the prestigious award this school year.

**March 5, 2013**

Four APS elementary school teachers will be honored with the prestigious Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching at a luncheon Friday at the Embassy Suites.

The Golden Apple Award has been given since 1996 to 109 New Mexico teachers, recognizing that the quality of their teaching is the single most important factor in their students' academic success. Seven New Mexico teachers won the award this year.

The APS recipients are

- **Ulrike Kerstges** who teaches physical education at Ventana Ranch and Tierra Antigua
- **Theresa Sandoval** who teaches kindergarten at Dolores Gonzales Elementary
- **Jeff Tuttle** who teaches third through fifth grades at Monte Vista
- **Cristal Dawn Wilson** who teaches pre-kindergarten at Mark Twain Elementary.

The Golden Apple Foundation of New Mexico was founded in 1994. Each year the award rotates among levels, with 2013 awards -- the 18<sup>th</sup> year -- going to elementary school teachers.

The award-winning teachers were nominated last spring by either their school's principal or by other teachers, parents, students or community members. The 144 teachers nominated teach at 113 different schools in 36 communities. Nominees represent 31 of New Mexico's 89 districts, with four teaching at charter schools and 15 at private schools from around the state.

Nominated teachers complete a lengthy application describing their teaching methodology, professional development experiences, community volunteerism, and other aspects of their teaching philosophy. Applications are read and scored first by teachers who have won the award in past years and then by a selection committee comprised of active and retired educators.

Fifteen teachers were selected as finalists. In the final stage of the selection process, a three-member team of the selection committee conducted a full-day site visit at each finalist's school. The team observed the teacher in the classroom and interviewed the principal, other teachers, parents, students, and the finalist.

Teachers are selected first and foremost on the basis of the quality of their teaching. Teachers receiving the award also have demonstrated a commitment to the profession of teaching and to their own professional growth as well as that of their colleagues. Many of them mentor other teachers at their schools; others often serve as the supervising teacher for teacher interns.

The award includes a cash stipend and \$4,000 to be used by each winning teacher toward his or her professional development. Each also receives a laptop computer donated by Intel Corporation. Award winners become part of the Golden Apple Academy of Fellows, an ongoing professional community of outstanding teachers that meets four times each year.

Finalists not selected for the award are recognized as Golden Apple Teachers of Distinction. Finalists from APS are **Kathleen Cole**, who teaches first grade at Bandelier, and **Christine Laffle**, a fifth-grade teacher at Zia.