



P R E S S R E L E A S E

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Sherry Miller Named 2008 Annie Sullivan Award Winner

Sherry Miller, a paraprofessional in the Life Skills classroom at Hamburg Area Middle School, was named the winner of the 2008 Annie Sullivan Award. She was honored, along with three other nominees, during an awards dinner at the Berks County Intermediate Unit on April 3.

The Annie Sullivan Award is given in recognition of an individual who has worked to encourage the understanding and promotion of students with disabilities in his or her school or community. Annie Sullivan was Helen Keller's devoted teacher and mentor who was nearly blind herself. After treatment, she regained her sight and committed herself to teaching the blind and deaf. This year marks the 22nd annual presentation of the award in Berks County.

"I was very surprised and honored to be nominated," said Miller. "And, I was even more shocked and elated to win. It definitely took awhile for it to sink in." Miller, who works with children 11- to 15-years old, finds her job to be very gratifying. "It's very rewarding to watch the students accomplish goals and to see the joy on their faces when they do."

Cindy Zerr, special education director for Hamburg Area School District, nominated Miller for the award. According to Zerr, Miller played an integral role in the creation of the Life Skills class at Hamburg and exemplifies the qualities of a true professional. "Sherry displays professionalism at all times and is someone who is always there for her students and goes the extra mile for them," said Zerr. "I can always count on her. She is a plus to any program. She analyzes what needs to be done, takes on the challenge, and gives 200 percent."

One example of Miller's dedication involves creating and following a routine for a student with serious behavioral difficulties. Zerr said that Miller has been consistent and determined in helping the student and has shown initiative, enthusiasm, and determination while remaining positive, even on the most trying days. Colleagues describe Miller as humble and someone who deflects credit or any recognition.

The paraprofessional says she does not do her job for attention or accolades. "I truly enjoy working with the kids and I love being around them," said Miller. "There's a connection between us. I'm not always aware of what we are accomplishing together because I focus on the task and I see what needs to be done on a daily basis. I'm just trying to help the students build life skills."