



Monday, March 15, 2004

## Cramer to receive outstanding teacher award

By **Jeff Samoray**, *OU Web Writer*

The **International Reading Association** recently honored Oakland University Distinguished Professor of Education Ron Cramer with its **2004 Outstanding Teacher Educator in Reading Award**. The \$1,000 award recognizes an outstanding college or university teacher of reading methods or reading-related courses. Nominees must be association members, affiliated with a college or a university, and engaged in teacher preparation in reading at the undergraduate and/or graduate levels. Cramer will receive the award on Wednesday, May 5, at the 2004 International Reading Association convention in Reno, Nev.

"Three of my former students, all of whom are teachers, nominated me for the award," Cramer said. "They went through the trouble of doing this for me, and I'm grateful to them and Oakland University. I've got some wonderful colleagues and students and have had many happy years here."

Cramer, who first came to OU in 1967, helped establish OU's early childhood master's degree and the Lowry Early Childhood Education Center. He also has published hundreds of articles and many books on reading and writing. His "Spelling" series has served as an official textbook in elementary schools since the 1970s. In 1996, he received OU's Teaching Excellence Award and the Governor's Award for Teaching Excellence. He also was named distinguished professor last year and continues to teach courses in reading, writing and language arts.

"Professor Cramer's accomplishments are well recognized as evidenced by many professional awards and accolades," said Mary Otto, dean of the School of Education and Human Services. "He is an outstanding role model for those of us in higher education because in addition to being a full time scholar, he continues to focus on the classroom where students and their learning remain his highest priority. He concentrates on helping his students become excellent teachers so that the cycle of teaching and learning endures into the future."

Cramer has worked with thousands of young people as director of Oakland's Reading and Writing Clinic. Among the texts he cites as most important to those learning to read are the works of Dr. Suess (Theodor Geisel) and J.K. Rowling, author of the "Harry Potter" series.

"Geisel uses simple language to tell some pretty good stories. He's very important to our field," Cramer said. "And I wouldn't be surprised if Rowling has had more influence on children's reading than any five professors. I know one third-grader in particular who has read every one of the Harry Potter books. They're the Dr. Suess books of our time, but at a different level. They're real stories with elaborate plots that delve into fantasy. I think they've had a tremendous impact on children."

As for his Oakland students, Cramer hopes they'll leave his class with an understanding of the lasting impact a teacher can have on a child, much the same as Cramer's sixth-grade teacher, Ms. Fuller.

"The most important thing I hope my students learn is that teachers can have an extraordinary influence on the lives of the people they teach," Cramer said. "The content is not the primary thing teachers pass on. They're role models for what they want their students to become. Teachers should be passionate about their profession and understand that, in some fashion, something they do or say can help change their students' lives."

"Ms. Fuller had an influence on me, though I didn't realize it until I became a teacher myself many years later. She thought I showed promise when all others considered me hopeless. I was a troubled kid who disrupted her classroom, but she put me in charge of our Victory Garden, and in return for that responsibility, she expected better behavior from me. And I did behave better because I knew that she cared about me. She was a tough lady, but somehow she showed me that she cared, and I wish I were able to see her again and thank her for that."

Cramer's latest book, "The Language Arts: A Balanced Approach to Teaching Reading, Writing, Listening, Talking and

Thinking," was published last year to much critical acclaim. He's currently writing a book, with the working title "Teaching Reading to Every Child," to be published by Allyn & Bacon.

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