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Doctoral candidate up for national Teacher of the Year

By **Rebecca Wyatt Thomas**, OU Web Writer

In late April, June Teisan will stand on the lawn of the White House with 55 other educators as part of a national conference for state teachers of the year. While Teisan said she will learn a lot of information at the conference that she can bring back to her classroom, she will also learn whether she has been selected as the National Teacher of the Year.

Teisan, a science teacher at the Harper Woods Secondary School, was named the 2007-08 Michigan Teacher of the Year. She also received the 2006 Jacqueline Loughheed Scholarship from OU and 2005 **Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching** (PAEMST), the nation's highest honor for teaching in these fields. Based on her Michigan Teacher of the Year award, Teisan was nominated for the national honor.

As part of the national honor application process, Teisan submitted a 15-page application and letters of recommendation. She is one of the four finalists who were selected to participate in a three-day interview process in Washington D.C. The finalists were videotaped, participated in panel interviews, mock press conferences and met with the selection committee. From those finalists, a recipient will be selected on April 30.

"I love talking about education and this gave me the perfect opportunity to do so. I am thrilled to have the opportunity to shine the spotlight on the good things that are happening and at the same time discuss how we can improve what we do. There are inequities in education. The inequities in education very closely parallel the inequities we see in our society," Teisan said, citing the quality education received by the middle to upper class while there is often a struggle to meet the needs of the students in urban centers. "I really want to say 'education should improve and it can improve. I want to be a part of that improvement, but don't lay it all on the shoulders of teachers, it's embedded in our social fabric.'"

Teisan was able to share a personal experience with the selection committee. After an article appeared in the "Twist," a section of The Detroit Free Press, Teisan received a letter from a student who wanted to be a teacher despite her parents' desire for her to be an engineer. She wanted some advice from Teisan on what to do.

"I encouraged her to do what she feels passionate about and explore the passion," Teisan said. "It made me realize that when you have the chance to talk about the great things that are happening in your classroom, you don't know who it's going to impact and inspire."

As Michigan's Teacher of the Year, Teisan has the opportunity to speak to many groups about being a teacher. She said she speaks at about three to four different venues each month to encourage students to consider the profession. She said while the economic climate is changing around the country in terms of where teachers are needed, she said they are still needed everywhere, especially in special education and in the sciences and math.

"If there is a passion for it, consider teaching. Start taking the classes, but also get into the classroom. Volunteer with schools. It's a great way to see what grade levels you like," Teisan said.

Teisan has a passion for science and enjoys teaching her students.

"I can still make an impact on my students in my classroom. I see that as paramount--to interact with my 12-year-olds day in and day out and unveil all the fun that can be involved in a science classroom," Teisan said. "I think I can balance that with getting out there and sharing my message with the community. I fully intend to be a voice and I would like to see a number of exciting changes happening in education in the 21st century. Walls are invisible now. The classroom can reach beyond the perimeters of the building."

Teisan will share her passion with 55 other educators as part of the National Teacher of the Year Conference. She looks forward to learning from her national colleagues and taking the information back to the other teachers at her school.

"We talk the same talk and walk the same walk. It's a unique opportunity to spend a week together learning from each other," Teisan said. She said there will be teachers from all over the United States and its territories, including American Samoa. They will all be able to share their stories. "I'm not going to get a chance to visit American Samoa but I can talk to the teacher from there about what her challenges are and we can find commonality and really challenge the good, the bad and the indifferent."

Teisan is up against three teachers from Oregon, California and Virginia for the National Teacher of the Year honor. All of the candidates have a technology, science or engineering background.

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June Teisan

SUMMARY

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