

CEAO 2009 Teacher of the Year



We are delighted to congratulate Della Morris, mathematics teacher, Indian River High School, as TEACHER OF THE YEAR at our Ohio Correctional Education Association Conference. Della was selected from 335 correctional educational members across the state of Ohio. Della's enthusiasm for teaching, commitment to our youth, and exceptional attitude are a testament to her daily professionalism.

Della Morris, Ohio, stated that it "Ain't about how fast I get there, ain't about what's waiting on the other side, it's the climb." These lyrics are truly a testament about my journey of becoming an educator. As I was growing up, I didn't aspire to go to college nor become a teacher. Neither one of my parents graduated from high school, let alone college, and I decided to enter the workforce and was hired as a secretary for a small development firm. Several years later and six months pregnant with my second child, I was standing in the unemployment line as a result of layoffs. I attained a full-time position with Mount Union College working for the professors in the Science and Mathematics Departments. This was the turning point in my life. In addition to working full-time and raising a family, I began taking classes part-time. I will never forget the frustration when I failed my first math exam, nor the embarrassment I felt of having to hire a tutor when students who were ten years younger were catching on quickly. Yet, eleven years later, I graduated with honors earning a Bachelor of Science Degree in Mathematics with a minor in Education. I spent five years teaching in both public and private sectors before acquiring a position at Indian River Juvenile Correctional Facility.

I continue to teach math at Indian River as a math teacher. In 2005, I obtained my master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Ashland University. As a product of my master's thesis, I developed a Positive Rewards System where my students earn levels based on their behavior and work habits which is still in place today. Students can earn rewards such as food items, Character Counts Awards, nominations for Student of the Week, and commendation letters. My personal philosophy is best summed up in the following quote: "Choose a job you love and you will never have to work a day in your life." I love my job and am passionate about helping my students.