NISOD award honors RCC Early Childhood Education instructor

Connie Denham believes that young children need skilled advocates to help them overcome many hazardous societal problems. Her dedicated work in training childcare workers and teachers has earned Denham selection as the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development 2005 outstanding instructor/leader.

“Children should have access to quality early education,” said Denham, the Rogue Community College Early Childhood Education Department head. “I feel like I’m making a difference in the world.”

Other instructors nominated for the award were Francine Gentile, social science and human services; Lutz Kramer, humanities; Christine McCaffrey, adult basic education math and science; Mollie Owens-Stevenson, counselor; and Linda Wagner, department head/instructor, Allied Health.

All will be honored May 6 at RCC’s spring inservice training. Denham will represent RCC at the NISOD spring conference in Austin, Texas.

Denham joined RCC’s faculty in 2000 after teaching 15 years at West Nevada Community College. An early-on advocate of distance education, she uses videoconferencing technology extensively to teach classes simultaneously to as many as four widespread sites, including the Redwood Campus in Grants Pass, Riverside Campus in Medford, the RCC Illinois Valley Learning Center in Kerby, and Southern Oregon University.

“It’s a challenge and it takes a lot of energy to project and serve each site and make them feel involved,” Denham said.

Currently about 125 students are studying in RCC’s Early Childhood program, which covers birth through age 8. Denham worked as part of a team that formalized a curriculum pathway with SOU so that students may continue at the four-year level after finishing at Rogue, Bieber said.

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She also helped secure a grant to build a new childhood education center on RCC’s Redwood Campus as part of a joint effort with other local agencies. Construction on the first phase is set to begin fall 2005 and be completed the following June. It will house a lab school for teaching and observation and Head Start classrooms.

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For more information contact:
Connie Denham, instructor, Early Childhood Education, 956-7053.
Midge Shaw, coordinator, RCC Teaching and Learning Center, 956-7244.