



Printer-friendly story
Read more at tcpalm.com

Innovative teaching program used in St. Lucie recognized nationally

By Lisa Bolivar

Thursday, February 11, 2010

ST. LUCIE COUNTY — An innovative teaching certification program benefitting schools in St. Lucie County and offered through Florida Atlantic University has won recognition from Mutual of America Life Insurance Company.

The Accelerated Induction into Teaching program was named a merit finalist for the 2009 Mutual of America Community Partnership Award, an award that highlights contributions made by nonprofit organizations in partnership with public, private or other social organizations that benefit society.

FAU's program was recognized because of its impact in 106 schools in eight counties — including St. Lucie — for its innovative way of creating trained teachers who go on to work in under-performing schools in economically disadvantaged areas, according to a news release from Mutual of America.

Instead of lengthy classroom internships, AIT selects its best students and actually places them in the classroom in a paid substitute teaching position that frequently becomes full time once the student graduates.

Kathy Huie, director of teacher support for the School Board of St. Lucie County, said the AIT program solves two issues: filling vacant teaching slots with trained educators and giving a polish to those educators before they enter the work force full time.

"It was a way to get highly qualified teachers into the classroom more quickly," Huie said, adding that she is now seeing the first AIT graduates start to move up. "I think almost 99 percent of the teachers who went into these program stayed in their schools and are now moving into administration."

With Baby Boomers starting to retire, the need for qualified teachers is increasing, Huie said. That, along with Florida's class size amendment, is going to also increase the demand for teachers, making the AIT program even more valuable.

Jan Andrew, director of the program that incorporates AIT, said the program is good for all involved.

"We always promote it as university and college benefit, school district benefits and the classroom benefit," Andrew said.

Only one student from St. Lucie County was chosen for the AIT program this semester. Amanda Saffioti, 21, a senior education major at FAU, is teaching fourth-grade at Dan McCarty School in Fort Pierce.

“You have to have a certain GPA and certain grades in certain courses,” Saffioti said. “But FAU gives you all the tools you need to be a successful teacher from day 1 you are the teacher from the second you step into the class.”



© 2010 Scripps Newspaper Group — Online