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News Release

Colorado Online Teachers of the Year Announced

The Colorado Department of Education today announced the Colorado 2009 Online Elementary and Secondary Teachers of the Year are Christina Narayan and DeAnn Chasarik, respectively.

Narayan is a kindergarten and first grade teacher for Branson School Online located in Branson, Colorado. Branson School Online is a public, online school that serves students in grades K–12. The school operates in an alternative setting and with a brick and mortar school in a traditional school setting.

“When I discovered online education seven years ago, I was immediately passionate about its possibilities to individualize for all students,” said Narayan. “Each student is unique with specific strengths, talents and learning styles. And every student can succeed with educational experiences that reflect their individuality.”

Narayan was selected in part because of her vision for supporting the whole child. She spends time getting to know her students and their families and has a desire for her students to feel connected to her, their classrooms and their school. At the end of every school year Narayan creates a summer reading plan based on final assessment results so students can continue to achieve new reading levels over the summer.

“Christina has achieved many accomplishments in her time as an online educator, but the skill that she continues to impress me with is that no goal is ever enough to satisfy her drive for reaching students and helping them succeed,” said Branson K-8 Principal Leanna Walker

Christians. "I am very honored to work with Christina every day to make a difference in the lives of our Colorado students."

Colorado's 2009 Online Secondary Teacher of the Year is DeAnn Chasarik. Chasarik teaches English and business education at Colorado Online Learning. Colorado Online Learning (formerly Colorado Online School Consortium) began in 1998 as a joint venture between 14 rural, suburban, and urban school districts in Colorado. With 35 online teachers, Colorado Online Learning remains the largest statewide provider of supplemental online courses.

"By staying current in my knowledge and skills I am more effective as an educator," said Chasarik. "My students have embraced technologies with relish, so taking the lead from the learner, I have learned to alter my teaching to make use of whichever devices and technologies surround my students."

Chasarik believes reaching out to her students involves several strategies: teaching in a cultural context; providing access to field experiences and technology through projects; and making subject matter relevant to real life.

"Dee's effective online teaching style has evolved from her leadership in designing and developing courses," said Colorado Online Learning Director of Curriculum and Instruction Jodi Holzman. "In her personal finance course, Dee engages students in projects and creates a rich, multi-media experience for them, taking advantage of Internet resources to help students connect with and learn the content."

For more information, contact Mark Stevens, 303-866-3898, or Megan McDermott, 303-866-2334, in the CDE Office of Communications. To sign up for the CDE e-mail news service, please visit <http://www.cde.state.co.us/Communications/index.html>.

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