

Tech teachers honoured

■ TWO NIAGARA TEACHERS RECEIVE AWARDS

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A commitment to teaching technology skills to students earned two Niagara public board teachers Ontario-wide recognition.

The Ontario Council for Technology Education gave its elementary and secondary awards of excellence to two teachers in the District School Board of Niagara (DSBN).

Gary Young, of Welland's Eastdale Secondary School, received the 2006 Secondary School Excellence in Teaching award, while his counterpart Todd Thorne, of Queen Mary Public School in St. Catharines, won the elementary school award.

Young credited the award to the team of teachers at Eastdale, as well as the school and board administrations which have shown impressive support for technology education programs.

"One person alone could never have accomplished what these awards stand for," said Young.

The technology council annually recognizes deserving individuals and organizations for contributions and dedication to students and the furtherance of technological education in Ontario.

"(Young and Thorne) demonstrate the qualities, skills and knowledge most valued in today's educators," said Kevin Graham, technology consultant for the DSBN.

"Their skills have an impact not only on their students but on technological education at their schools and at the board level."

Young, 54 years old, has been teaching at Eastdale since 1988.

A Welland native, he worked in the automotive/transportation industry in the city from 1971 to 1985, before going back to teacher's college and earning a diploma for technology education.

He's been head of the Eastdale technology department since 1997.

"I feel so strongly about the positives of industry and technology education that I wanted to pass on information and encourage students to consider a career in these fields,"

said Young, explaining why he decided to enter the teaching profession.

"There are so many options for them out there."

The relatively new emphasis on skilled trades and technology training comes as no surprise to Young.

"We always knew it was out there," he said.

"But the trades weren't as well accepted as they are now. The reality now is going into one of these shops is like walking into a hospital, in terms of equipment and appearance."

Clean working conditions, good pay scales with benefits and an emphasis on professionalism all serve to make the trades viable career options, he said, and have helped change the public perception of jobs in these areas.

Young's obvious passion for the field is one reason why Eastdale's technology program is considered among the best. The school has about 600 students enrolled in classes and technology is among the largest departments, he said.

The Ontario Council for Technology Education represents tech teachers across the province.

The excellence awards were presented at the council's annual confer-



TRIBUNE PHOTO ZACK STELEMACI

Gary Young, Eastdale Secondary School director of technical studies, holds the 2006 Ontario Council for Technology Education, Excellence in Teaching Award. Young was presented with the provincial award at the OTCE Annual Conference/Awards Banquet on Friday, May 12 at the Nottawasaga Inn in Alliston.

ence, held at the Nottawasaga Inn in Alliston on the weekend of May 12 and 13. The conference was attended by more than 400 technology teachers from across Ontario, who met to share

program ideas and approaches.

Young said he asked why he was nominated and chosen for the award

"I was told, 'You stepped up to the plate,'" he said.

"But the more I thought about it the more I realized I couldn't step up to the plate without the backing of an awesome team, from the people in my department and all the way up the line to the board office. They gave me the award, but I feel it represent everyone."