

Beacon Hill Byline by Mary Rogeness

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A Quiet Hero

You may know Mary Ginley as Mrs. Ginley, a Center School second grade teacher. Or you may know her as a recent Massachusetts Teachers of the Year. But I met Mary most recently when she was honored by the Boston Celtics as a hero among us.

Here is our hero's story. Mary was named the Massachusetts Teacher of the Year in 1998 in recognition of her years of dedicated teaching in both Holyoke and Longmeadow.

As the teacher of the year, she was elected by the Celtics for recognition as part of "Heroes Among Us," a program jointly sponsored by the Celtics and Fox Sports Net. As one of the first honorees, she was introduced to the home crowd and applauded as she threw out the game ball at the Fleet Center. Since Mary's evening in the spotlight the "heroes" have become a regular part of home games, and in the two succeeding years more than 60 people have been so honored.

This summer, all of the honorees were honored at a State House ceremony. Invited to attend on Mary's behalf, I do not believe I have ever before been in the presence of such an accomplished group. We had inner city doctors, life-saving heroes in sudden emergencies, special Olympians and educators. Each one had a story of heroism, meeting the program standard of making "exceptional and lasting contributions to their communities."

In addition to their bond of outstanding service, the honorees shared one other trait that was particularly impressive to me. They all seemed awed by their presence among their peers and genuinely self-effacing about their own accomplishments.

As the ceremony commenced and media worlds. Lieutenant Governor Swift, Red Auerbach and Celtics Team Captain Antoine Walker were there to offer congratulations. Even Senator Kennedy had arrived to comment their accomplishments.

Each hero received a citation and one more ovation from the audience to demonstrate that the work they do in their daily lives does indeed make them heroes in our eyes. And after the ceremony, when the applause had faded and the cameras had finished flashing, I feel certain that they all went home to continue to pursue their quiet work.