

Grammys honor DGN music teacher

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DOWNERS GROVE – During an April 22 presentation at Downers Grove North High School, the Grammy Foundation confirmed what many at the school already knew: Brayer Teague is one of the best music teachers around.

Teague, head of the school's fine arts department and the band director, received a \$1,000 honorarium for being one of 10 national finalists for the Grammy Music Educator Award.

"I was really humbled by the award," he said. "It's nothing that a teacher would ever expect to have happen to them."

The Grammy Foundation awarded a matching honorarium of \$1,000 to the school. The prizes were made possible by sponsors Ford, Journeys, Converse and Disney Performing Arts.

Teague, 47, has taught at North for 23 years and has been in the department for 20 years. He said his career is a marriage of his love for music and teaching.

He grew up in Columbia, Mo., as the son of two educators and started his band career in the fifth grade as a percussionist.

Teague came to the Chicago area when he enrolled at Northwestern University and fell in love with the area because of all the artistic experiences available.

After graduating, Teague taught elementary and middle school students for three years in Highland Park before applying for a position at Downers Grove North.

"I was drawn to Downers Grove because of the history of community support for the arts," he said. "The parents here tend to be very committed to supporting their children in every facet of their education."

He also thought enough of the community to move and raise his family there.

While Teague has seen a handful of his students become music professionals, he said he enjoys helping all his students set and attain goals.

"For me, an even bigger part of being a high school music teacher [than teaching future music professionals] is being able to instill a lifelong love for the arts, regardless of their future profession," he said.

Teague keeps track of which students continue to play in band in col-

lege by hanging pennants from those schools in his classroom.

"I want to encourage the idea to continue to play and enjoy music after they leave," he said.

Senior Amelia Smerz, who plays trombone in marching band and jazz band under Teague, nominated him for the award.

"I just noticed Mr. Teague has been so dedicated to helping me get the best musical experience I can at North," she said. "I think he went above and beyond what most teachers are expected to do."

Steve DePeder, who had two children come through the music program, helped assemble the supporting documentation for the nomination.

"He's just a phenomenal educator," DePeder said. "As a parent, you look for a teacher to support you with what you're trying to do with your kids."

The school used its honorarium to pay for a student trip to Peoria to perform at the Illinois Music Education Conference.

Teague said he looks forward to providing students with more trips.

"One of the things I really enjoy is continuing to create outstanding performance opportunities for our students," he said.