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DEER PARK---Superintendent of Schools Arnold Adair and the Deer Park ISD Board of Trustees recently announced the selection of the district's two 2005-06 Teachers of the Year---Elementary Teacher of the Year Sarah Mills and Secondary Teacher of the Year Sharon Semmes.

Mills, a third-grade teacher who has taught seven years at Dabbs Elementary, is a Deer Park High School graduate whose mother is also an educator. "Teaching is in my blood, but more importantly, it's in my heart," she says. "When I wake up every morning, the first thought that pops into my head is, 'How can I make today the best day my students ever had?'"

As Adair announced her name at a staff meeting, Mills said she wasn't sure what had happened. "After the initial shock, a flood of emotions took over," she says. "I was so honored! I felt like things had come full circle. I was a student at Dabbs, ended up teaching at Dabbs, became campus Teacher of the Year, and now this! I am also looking forward to the upcoming school year. I want my campus to be proud that I was given this title. I intend to live up to it."



According to former Dabbs Assistant Principal Marty Emmons, Mills is a teacher who is willing to use any tool at her disposal to engage students in learning. "She has a flare

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for theatrics, a quick wit, a sense of humor, an even disposition, and a natural desire to have fun as a teacher," Emmons says. "What student wouldn't want a teacher who has a good time teaching and wants her students to enjoy learning, too?"

Semmes---a self-described "grizzled, old veteran" of 26 years in education---has spent the last six years as a Special Education teacher at Deer Park High School-South Campus. Reflecting on her career, she says, "My greatest moments in teaching have been those private, thrilling moments of magic, those moments when you know what you are doing is changing lives, including your own."

Semmes says she was surprised when Superintendent Adair announced that she had been selected to represent the district's high school and junior high educators. "I could not believe it," she says. "It's such a wonderful honor. I pray that I can live up to everyone's expectations and represent our district well. I'm just so honored and overwhelmed that people put this much confidence in me."



Ronda Kouba, principal of DPHS-SC, says Semmes cares about her students and is willing to go the extra mile to provide the best instruction possible for them. "It is such a pleasure to work with a teacher who loves teaching and loves her daily encounters with her students," Kouba says. "Her enthusiasm is as contagious as her bubbly smile."

Each campus Teacher of the Year is nominated and selected by his or her fellow teachers. A district committee narrows the nominees to two elementary and two secondary finalists, then---based on interviews---the committee names the district winners. The district Teachers of the Year represent DPIISD in the Region IV competition.

The DPISD campus teachers of the year are: Sharen K. Burden, Carpenter Elementary; Donna Box Cronan, Deepwater Elementary; Karen Schnitzer, Deer Park Elementary; Susan Walker, Fairmont Elementary; Brenda Michael, Parkwood Elementary; Vicki Bennett, San Jacinto Elementary; Tracie Chandler, Bonnette Junior High; Terri See, Deepwater Junior High; Elizabeth Ann Williams, Deer Park Junior High; Janyth M. McNeely, Fairmont Junior High; Cheryl A. Ray, Deer Park High School-North Campus; and Sandra L. Mayne, Wolters Accelerated High School.

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