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Arcadia News Teacher We Love December 2015

■ Passion Leads to Career

Story

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Posted: Tuesday, December 1, 2015 12:00 am

Christina Surrano

Frank's favorite teacher

Teacher Emma LeBlanc seeks to inspire drive for self-improvement as well as self-acceptance in her first-grade students.

This is Miss LeBlanc's fifth year teaching at St. Thomas the Apostle, a school she was serendipitously introduced to while visiting from Michigan. She became familiar with the school's reputation when she attended church services there one Sunday, while visiting a former college roommate. She met with the school's principal and moved to Arizona that summer.

Ann Marie Sunderhaus, and her two sons, Frank and Kevin, nominated Miss LeBlanc for the *Arcadia News* Teachers We Love award. Frank is now in third grade, but remembers his first-grade teacher with affection.

"[Miss LeBlanc] has always been Frank's favorite [teacher] and it was so sweet to see how excited Frank was when Kevin [found out she'd be his teacher]," said Ann Marie. "They enjoy learning. They tell me about funny things that happen in class. They talk about friendships. I know that's all fostered by the presence of the teacher. I think it's her persona of being sweet, kind and accepting."

During life before teaching, LeBlanc benefitted from watching many children grow up. She is one of about 150 first cousins. Her father was one of 17 children.

Ann Marie shared some of the tempered and patient encouragement LeBlanc offers to the parents. "She always says, 'I understand that there's a lot going on at home. There is stuff outside of school, but just do your very best and help them do their very best, and make sure you guide them and work with them.'"

Miss LeBlanc's inspiration to teach began with stories from her mother who had taught first grade for seven years before having children of her own. LeBlanc shared, "She would tell me about her experiences with families and kids and how much she missed it. I really look up to her...and once I started some of my college classes, the school I went to kept putting us into different classrooms to work with kids and I loved it."

LeBlanc said she truly enjoys her students and added, "They make me laugh a lot and make every day not feel like work. It's like coming in and being with my little school family."

When asked about how she deals with the academic demands on her first-graders, she said, "They all come in reading at different levels and that's one of the things we talk about; that God made us a certain way and some of us just get it right away and for others, it takes a little bit, but we'll get there."

When asked how growing up in a large extended family has impacted her perspective and teaching, LeBlanc stated, "You see how different each [family member is] and how their gifts contribute to this big happy family. People have weaknesses and strengths in other areas. It's all for the greater good. It helps me to be more accepting of everybody's strengths and limitations. They're all necessary."

Teachers chosen for the *Arcadia News* Teachers We Love Award receive an *Arcadia News* tote, a \$125.00 gift certificate from Salon Sandoval, a \$100.00 gift certificate for Postino Wine Cafe and an invitation to an end of the year luncheon for the year's winners.

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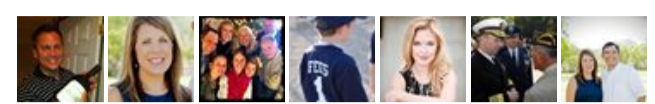
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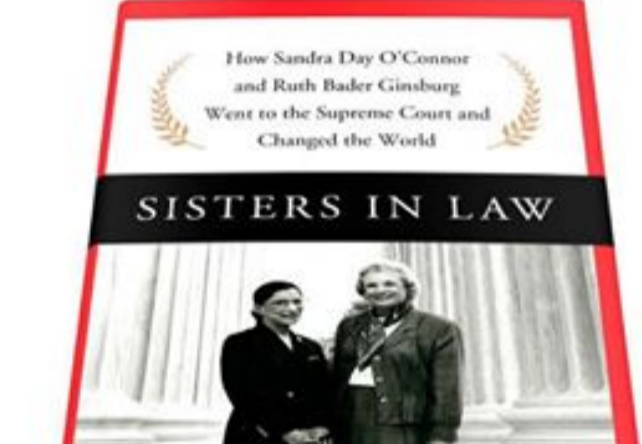
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Arcadia News shared a post.
December 7, 2015 at 8:40am

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