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Rotary honors top teachers

By Mark E. Vogler - mvogler@eagletribune.com

HAVERHILL — Superintendent/receiver Jeffrey C. Riley helped pay tribute last night to "the best teachers" in Lawrence Public Schools by telling a personal story about how an educator in Boston Public Schools has made a difference in the life of his 7-year-old daughter.

"Every day she comes home, she wants to be the teacher because she has a teacher who loves and cares about her," Riley told a crowd of about 300 at DiBurro's Function Facility.

"I want her to love school 10 years from now like she loves it now in the first grade," Riley said.

Riley said he hoped his daughter would continue to learn from people like her first grade teacher "or like are sitting out in front of me tonight."

The praise from the state-appointed receiver kicked off the Lawrence Rotary Club's 14th annual Teacher of the Year Awards banquet. Twenty-eight teachers from 19 different schools in the city were dinner guests, each receiving a certificate and red ribbon. Later, the group was whittled down to 12 finalists, with each teacher being asked to stand as a special narrative was read about their excellence as classroom teachers.

The Rotary Club presented four top awards — for two teachers of the year and two rising stars — each in the categories of Elementary School and Junior/Senior High School categories. Two Teachers of the Year received a Crystal Apple and a \$1,000 check with a \$1,000 check being awarded to their respective schools.

The two Rising Stars winners each received a \$500 check. A rising star is a teacher with under five years experience.

This year's winners were:

Margaret Chanquet, of the Oliver School, who teaches English Language Learners in grades five through eight. The 24-year veteran Lawrence educator received a Teacher of the Year Award for the Junior/Senior High School category.

Lee Ann Canzano, of the Bruce School, who teaches 5th grade math and science. She received a Teacher of the Year Award in the Elementary School category. She has been recognized as one of the district's best math and science teachers over the past 15 years.

Donna Balaourus, of the Bruce School, who teaches Special Education in the fifth grade. She was recognized as the Rising Star in the Elementary School category.

Sean Murphy, of the Parthum School, who teaches performing arts in grades 5 through 8. He received a Rising Star Award in the Junior/Senior High School category.