

ILLINOIS CLASSICAL CONFERENCE TEACHER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Our I.C.C. Teacher of the Year is Matthew Sparapani, a Latin and Greek teacher at St. Ignatius College Preparatory High School in Chicago.

Matt Sparapani, though, is a hard man to pin down. He keeps moving from activity to activity and keeps his students moving and involved too.

Matt has participated with students at the Illinois Junior Classical League conventions for many years and recently stepped up to help coordinate the conventions. His students do well in the medal and ribbon standings.

Matt not only has student teams in the Chicago Regional Certamen matches, but also offers to host every other year. When new leadership was needed, Matt volunteered to become one of three new co-coordinators. One of his co-leaders had high praise for Matt's helpfulness for sending emails and recruiting schools to participate.

The SICP Latin Club is a growing and active organization which gives the students extra time for learning Latin and Classical civilization.

Matt's students participate in the Illinois Latin Tournament and do well.

Matt takes students to Greece and Rome and travels extensively with his wife.

On top of all that, he is a head soccer coach for SICP.

About his academic background, Matt Sparapani is hard to pin down. His Facebook page indicates that he began his college years at Northwestern University in History, but does not give us a graduation year. Memory of friends say it was in the 1990's and that he started doctoral studies at Northwestern University and was teaching Greek Mythology and Latin there but no one was sure if his degree had been granted yet. But none of that matters because the unanimous opinion of the Awards Committee and everyone I talked to is that he is one great teacher.

As best memory serves, Matt started teaching high school at New Trier in 2001 and around that time was also teaching at Glenbrook and Northbrook high schools, and, in fact, started the Latin program at Northbrook. He left New Trier for St. Ignatius College Prep High School in 2005 and so has been there for about 10 years.

In addition, a friend recalled that Matt taught Greek Myth and Roman Lit at Feltre, a private non-profit liberal arts school for adults on the north side of Chicago.

What is not hard to pin down is his qualifications for this Teacher of the Year Award. Everyone I talked to had unstinting praise for Matt as a teacher and as a wonderful human being. Comments included his being passionate about teaching and being eager to help. He was described as a team player, someone who works well with others and is always eager to help. There were many

comments on his collegiality including such an accolade from a Spanish teacher at New Trier. Another accolade noted how he inspires his students to be helpful to Certamen coordinators so that the program ran smoothly whenever at SICP.

His interest in teaching was well praised. One example was his having noted at New Trier that the Latin students did not have an opportunity to use the new computerized language lab. He found a summer grant that he and Judy Hayes used to design new curriculum enhancements to include language labs. And, then Judy and Matt that summer challenged themselves to translate some Seneca.

Matt Sparapani was not able to be with us so the award was presented in absentia.

Respectfully submitted,
Marilyn Brusherd for the Awards Committee