

# Cheers for teacher: Amazing, magical teacher named state's best

By CHRIS GULLICK - Staff Writer  
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Diane Fellner Day was celebrated at Citrus School Thursday.

The event honored Fellner, a second-grade teacher who has been distinguished as California Teacher of the Year by Phi Delta Kappa (PDK), a professional association of educators, and Wal-Mart.

The entire school turned out in red, white and blue, the band from Chico High School marched over and played, and dignitaries visited from the school district, city, county and Chico State University.

Hundreds of people gathered in the school courtyard amidst the puddles, their smiles defying the cloudy skies.

Although the sun refused to come out, the students recognized the virtual light of their lives when they sang Fellner a rewritten and rehearsed version of "You are my Sunshine."

Although the event was planned as a surprise for her, Fellner said she suspected something was up earlier in the week when a small student told her, "Mrs. Fellner, we're going to sing a song to you."

Fellner's praises were sung -- sometimes musically and sometimes verbally -- by numerous colleagues and dignitaries, and she received gifts in the form of plaques, certificates, mementos and flowers.

When her colleagues explained Fellner's qualities, the word "magical" occurred again and again.

Kate Jordan, a fellow teacher who performed her student teaching duties with Fellner, talked about Fellner's magical way of using music to teach reading and her annual class drama productions.

Jordan described Fellner's constant care for all her students and concluded, "The most magical ingredient is teaching with love."

Principal Cherie McGuire asked, "How do you put a value on heart?"

Evan Smith, representing PDK, told the assembly that Fellner was chosen for three reasons -- her tireless dedication to students, her inspiration to colleagues and her community spirit.

Fellner learned last spring that she had been honored as teacher of the year for Chico, one of 197 awards throughout California.

That honor has been dwarfed by the state award, which automatically makes her eligible for the national award, to be announced within a couple of weeks.

The state award also nets \$10,000 and a banner for Citrus School.

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