

# Golden Apple finalist is in Will County

The presence of a Lincoln-Way Central High School teacher among the 32 finalists for the prestigious Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching recognizes Will County's excellent educational opportunities, according to Rich Duran, the county's Regional Superintendent of Schools.

"This is the first year Will County teachers were eligible for the Golden Apple," Duran said, "and we're excited to see one of our local teachers among the finalists. This fulfills a goal I wanted to see the county reach before I retire."

Mike Bultman, who teaches choral music, guitar and music theory at Lincoln-Way Central in New Lenox, was among 941 high school teachers from Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake and Will Counties nominated for the 2007 awards.

The finalists will be honored at a Celebration of Excellence in Teaching to be held from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Feb. 17 at the House of Blues in Chicago.

Bultman, who has a bachelors degree from Northwestern University

and a masters degree from Michigan State University, said the most important word in the phrase, "music teacher," is "teacher."

"I try to make it about the kids," he said. "I think it's really important that the classroom be a safe place for them."

He works with all levels of students, he said, from those who have already developed musical talent to some "who have never seen a note of music before." For some, music is just another class, while for others, it's the highlight of their day.

An awards selection committee composed of local educators will observe finalists in the classroom and interview their principals, along with colleagues, parents and students.

The 10 winners, who will be chosen next month, will receive a tuition-free fall-term sabbatical at Northwestern University, a personal computer, \$3,000 and membership in the Golden Apple Academy.

An awards ceremony for the winners will be held May 12 at the Hyatt Regency Chicago.