Sheffield Earns State Adult Education Award

ESL Teacher Honored at Association’s Annual Convention

BENTONVILLE, Ark. (Nov. 3, 2011) – Danny Sheffield has been selected as the 2011 Outstanding Adult Education Teacher by the Arkansas Association of Continuing and Adult Education.

The award was announced at the association’s convention in North Little Rock on Oct. 27 and 28.

Sheffield teaches English as a Second Language in the NorthWest Arkansas Community College Adult Education Program. He has been a member of the college’s ESL faculty since 1999.

Sheffield said he believes that no one receives an honor like the outstanding teacher award without the support of many others. He identified key elements of that support as the backing from NWACC for the adult education program and, within the program itself, the support of the director, teachers and staff. He also cited the support of his wife, Patti, during the past 36 years.

Sheffield received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in English from San Francisco State University. His concentration at the graduate level was in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. After graduating from San Francisco State with honors, Sheffield taught English for two years in the island state of Yap in the Federated States of Micronesia. He said this was a great learning experience and solidified his desire to work with non-native speakers of English.

During his tenure as an ESL teacher, Sheffield has written curriculum, developed new classes on-site and in industry off-site, and provided professional development for fulltime and part-time teachers. He also wrote the curriculum for a bridge program to help ESL students transition to college credit classes. This program became NWACC’s College Intensive English Program.

Sheffield has presented at the Arkansas Association of Continuing and Adult Education and at Arkansas Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages conferences. He also served on the Department of Career Education’s committee, which developed the Arkansas ESL curriculum guidelines.

While Sheffield has accomplished much at the community and state levels, his true passion has always been for his students, said Ben Aldama, dean of adult education at NWACC. Sheffield spends hours preparing for his classes and modifying the curriculum to meet his students’ needs, Aldama said.
“Danny helps them with financial planning/budgeting, has helped them with clothing and household needs and has guided them in meeting their health care needs,” he said. “Danny encourages all of his students to continue their education in NWACC credit classes. He assists them in applying for admission and for financial aid. He takes groups of students on field trips to the main campus and to sites throughout the city.”

Sheffield said the greatest reward he receives from being a teacher of non-native speakers of English is the opportunity to associate with a worldwide audience.

“Appreciation of people and cultures is one of the best benefits that comes with teaching ESL,” he said.

AACAE is the state organization for adult education professionals. The organization meets annually for professional development and to honor outstanding teachers, administrators and students.

Sheffield’s honor is the fourth AACAE honor for the NWACC Adult Education program. Linda Harris was the Outstanding Adult Education Teacher in 2005. Martha Cortes was the 2006 Outstanding Adult Education Paraprofessional, and Margarita Solorzano was the 2007 Outstanding Friend of Adult Education for her partnership efforts between the Hispanic Women’s Organization and NWACC Adult Education.

The NWACC Adult Education program provides free instruction to adults throughout Benton County in GED preparation, English as a Second Language, and basic reading, writing and math skills. The open-entry policy allows adults to enroll at any time. More information about the program is available by calling 479-986-6911.

NorthWest Arkansas Community College is a comprehensive, public two-year college that serves and strengthens the community through learning for living. NWACC’s service area is defined by the Arkansas Department of Higher Education as Benton and Washington counties in extreme northwest Arkansas. The commitment of NWACC to life-long learning can be seen in the quality of instruction it offers, and the variety of programs it has designed to move students into the job market in a minimum amount of time, enrich people's lives, and prepare them to further their education. For more information, visit www.nwacc.edu.

Cutline:
Ben Aldama, dean of adult education for NorthWest Arkansas Community College, from left, stands with Danny Sheffield and NWACC President Becky Paneitz. Sheffield was selected as the 2011 Outstanding Adult Education Teacher by the Arkansas Association of Continuing and Adult Education. The award was presented at the association’s convention in late October.