



Teachers are the heart and soul of our communities and our society.

Years ago a young boy was classified as “uneducable” and not allowed to attend school. The mom and child could not believe the edict given to them. A teacher overheard the conversation and offered to tutor the boy with his severe stuttering

problem. She would do this after her regular teaching day and for no compensation because she wanted to help this boy and his mother. Time passed and the boy was able to be admitted to school. Years later this young boy, now a man, gave a speech to the educators of his state and paid honor to his teacher Mrs. Marean who made his speech possible. With tearful expression he thanked her for never giving up on him and making his life successful. His name was Cliff Evans, and he was the new governor of the state of Wyoming.

“The greatest profession of all is to teach,” said Theodore Brameld. “Teachers affect eternity...their influence never stops,” said Henry Brooks Adams. “Teachers of this country...have its future in their hands,” said William James. One of the prominent people of the last

century...Helen Keller said, “The most important day in all my life is the one on which my teacher, Ann Mansfield Sullivan, came to me.”

This last statement by Helen Keller can be echoed by hundreds of thousands of children and adults in this great state of Utah whose lives have been inspired and motivated by great teachers. If you were to ask a group of people—any group, outside of their immediate family who had the most influence on their lives, 80% of them would respond that it was a “teacher.”

Teachers are the heart and soul of our communities and our society. They make all other professions possible. They make us think...they push us beyond our limits... they help us to find direction and meaning in our lives like the example of Governor Cliff Evans. They believe in us until we believe in ourselves.

Not long ago a teacher and her student said hello to each other in the parking lot. The boy

The Greatest of All

was in her history class for his second year. He had failed in the 11th grade and now had to pass her class for graduation. He had passed the first two quarters, but winter quarter he was failing. He was not attending regularly. The teacher could have avoided conversation, but instead said to her student, “Ryan would you like to get a drink and some fries at the nearby McDonalds?” He said yes, and in their conversation he shared with his teacher some of his goals. He wanted to make his girlfriend and mom proud of him and he wanted to go into the military. She offered to help him after school and to tutor him in his other classes. It was hard for him to make up the work and pass his classes, but with her constant help and encouragement, she was able to see him achieve his goal of graduation later that spring. The story does not end here. Time passed and she received a call from Ryan’s

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wife saying that he would be on T.V. and would she tune in to “Good Morning America.” With tears streaming down her face she watched Ryan talk with his wife and mother and tell them how he had been involved with the capture of Saddam Hussein. Wow! She has taught him in history...and now she would teach others about him as he became part of her future history lessons. Yes, Ryan had made his mother and his wife very proud, and he indeed was a great success in the military. The story surely would have had a different ending if Ms. Jacklin, his history teacher, had not cared enough to go the extra mile for Ryan.

Similar stories happen every day in our classrooms. Lives are inspired and changed because of great teachers. There are not adequate words to express our gratitude for great teachers and their influence upon our lives. They come to work day after day giving their best. “Their stories are seldom in the newspaper (or on T.V.). They don’t have discipline problems. Their view of what they are doing is deep and long and large. They are in the construction business—building life, community, country and culture,” said Robert Fulgrum.

Did you have one of these teachers? Have you ever let this teacher know what he or she meant to you? If not,



maybe it’s time you did. Each year the Granite Education Foundation Board of Directors honor ten teachers at the Grand America Hotel. It is a Cinderella night as we are touched by the magnificence of great teachers. Tears are shed, hearts are full of gratitude for teachers who make a difference...a tremendous difference in the lives of our children. Teachers need our respect and approval and praise, too.

Are you one of these teachers? If so, thanks. Heartfelt thanks, again, again and again.

Mr. Whipple is a former special education teacher and principal in Granite School District (35 years), and father of eight children. ■