By SAM HATCHER

Congratulations to **Debra Martin** of Mt. Juliet, Wilson County “Teacher of the Year.”

Mrs. Martin, a guidance counselor at Mt. Juliet Middle School, was presented the “Teacher of the Year” honor last Friday night at a special dinner at Cumberland University hosted by the event’s sponsors CedarStone Bank and Wilson County Motors.

“She has won her place in heaven” one family wrote about the recipient describing the care, compassion and concern she has shown for their child, a student at Mt. Juliet Middle School.

Accepting the award, Mrs. Martin attributed her career in education in part to her mother whom she said was her second grade teacher.

As she stood before peers and special guests in attendance, the honoree made it distinctly clear that first she loves her profession and second she loves the fact that she goes to a place, a school, every day to help make a student’s life better now and better for the future.

While she was one of 29 nominees recognized as “Teachers of the Year” attending the dinner with their respective principals, the remaining 28 should also be highlighted for their contributions to education.

Each teacher in this group of 29 is special.

Representing public and private schools, each nominee has clearly made a significant difference in the classroom. They are dedicated professionals but beyond this they are the heart and soul of what our future will be in Wilson County.

It is their influence that will shape and determine our future leaders.

The Wilson County Teacher of the Year Program celebrated its 14th anniversary this year. It is an appropriate way to express our community's appreciation to those who serve in education and to publicly demonstrate the importance we in Wilson County place on education.

Thank you, CedarStone Bank and Wilson County Motors for sponsoring this important program each year.

The remaining 28 nominees presented Friday night and their respective schools included **Melissa H. Campbell**
, Byars-Dowdy Elementary;
Juliana Bishop
, Carroll-Oakland Elementary;
Sherry Manners Eskew
, Castle Heights Upper Elementary;
Melanie Botts Quinn
, Coles Ferry Elementary;
Amy Steed
, Elzie D. Patton Elementary;
Cathy Carey
, Friendship Christian School;
Jennifer Conatser
, Gladeville Elementary;
Laura Cates
, Lakeview Elementary;
Kate Plumlee
, Lebanon High School;
Justin Michael Angel
, Modified Academin Program;
Tonya Boyer
, McClain Christian Academy;
Jenny Runyon
, Mt. Juliet Christian Academy;
Elizabeth McDaniel
, Mt. Juliet Elementary;
Theresa B. Wright
, Mt. Juliet High School.

Shaunna Davis, Rutland Elementary; **Natalie Trice**, Sam Houston Elementary; **Linda Davidson**, Southside Elementary;
Bonnie Lynn Lane, Stoner Creek Elementary;
Nicole Williams, Tuckers Crossroads Elementary;
Patti Brandt, W.A. Wright Elementary;
Linda Badger, Walter J. Baird Middle School;
LaConda Dodd McKinney, Watertown Elementary;
Burton Keith Goolsby, Watertown High School;
Stephanie Jernigan, West Elementary;
Carolyn Washing, West Wilson Middle School;
Malissa A. Pitts, Wilson Central High School;
Sherry LaNelle Buchanan, Wilson County Career Technical Center; and
Tammy Sheppard, Winfree-Bryant Middle School.