

Greetings Indiana MTA Board,

I am an elementary school teacher and I have little musical background. I do understand that this award is to go to Indiana's most talented music teacher. Wendy Stong is a gifted music teacher. Music isn't her only gift, nor is it her greatest gift that she offers the children at Carlisle School.

Wendy Stong is the bridge between "wants" and "needs" when it comes to her students. When she sees a gap or a void, she fills it. Monday through Friday, 8:00 to 3:00, she could be seen simply as our music teacher. But if you really stop, watch and listen, you'd learn that she is so much more.

Before she even gets to school, she has taken her two foster children to daycare. Both these children are considered to have special needs. The oldest of the two is a little girl that she had in her music class. She saw a broken, abused little girl and took her and her brother into her home to simply give them what all children deserve, safety and love. Wendy was never a parent until she opened the door to these two children.

Once she is in the building her feet never stop moving. She is in my first grade classroom teaching intense small reading groups. That's right, READING not music. I have a split kindergarten and first grade class. The needs of my students are extensive and Wendy has been a tremendous help. The growth my students have shown over the course of the school year has been phenomenal. My first grade students even put on a musical at the end of every school year, thanks to the help of Mrs. Stong. My students' success would not have been possible without Wendy's commitment to help me, help them.

After school she gives free music lessons to any student who wants to participate. Most days I stay after school and run the hallways. Everyday I hear two things bouncing off the walls as I make my way through the school. The first is the sounds of students practicing their instruments. The other is the sound of friends, laughing and sharing a moment. She has turned some of our most troubled students into talented musicians that no longer thrive on negative attention, but rather have found their niche in music. As Wendy says, "By giving lessons after school, I'm only helping to grow the seed I just planted in class." She now has an entire garden of students that love music because of her.

I work the clock at the basketball games and one game a year the band plays the National Anthem. In years past, there were so few kids that the band teacher had to play with them. This is no longer the case. Mrs. Stong now has a beginning band and an intermediate band that have competed and won gold at state competitions. She has students volunteering to sing the National Anthem at various games.

Wendy is only in her sixth year of teaching, but the impact she has had at Carlisle will span lifetimes.

Thank you,
Katherine McCammon
KIndergarten/First Grade Teacher
Carlisle Elementary School