

## Cape Coral's charter school teachers honored

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**9:53 P.M.** — In second grade, John Omundsen developed a passion for numbers.

He remembers the enjoyment of participating in flash card competitions against his classmates where he had to come up with an answer faster than his opponent or be eliminated. Omundsen didn't always come out on top. But tonight, he did.

Omundsen, 24, along with teachers Susi Kelly, 48, Peter Ndiang'ui, 54, and Kim Lucas, 34, were honored during a ceremony at Cape Harbour as the Cape Coral Municipal Charter School Foundation's Lighthouse Award recipients of 2010.

The prestigious award was developed last year to honor professionals of excellence within Cape Coral's charter school system.

"I'm very honored," Lucas said. "I wish all teachers could be honored every year. As a teacher, you need that little pat on the back to keep going."

Seven teachers of distinction also were honored during the ceremony.

"It's all about recognizing our blessings and being thankful," said Lee Bush, administrator of the charter school system. "... (Tonight) is a gathering of the kindred spirits who really care about kids."

And many of those kids care about their teachers in return. About 25 of Ndiang'ui's former students and their parents were in attendance at the ceremony cheering him on as he accepted his Waterford crystal lighthouse award.

"I'm not sure why they came back, but it must be something I did," said Ndiang'ui, who teaches geography and leadership development at Oasis High.

Former student Savannah Golden, 19, had Ndiang'ui as a history teacher at Canterbury School. She said she's never met another teacher like Ndiang'ui.

"He left such an impression on me," Golden said. "He's one of those teachers where even if you don't like history going in, his passion for the subject is contagious."

Omundsen has only been teaching for two years, but said he loves every minute of his job.

"I get to work and solve puzzles every day," he said. "I get to solve problems and help kids do that ... Many kids come in hating math, but they leave loving it after they begin to understand it."

His favorite part of any day is seeing a flash of recognition after a student has had trouble with a concept.

Kelly enjoys much of the same. As she took the platform to accept her award, she, too, reminded the audience of her love for teaching.

"If you find something you love, you'll never work a day in your life," Kelly said quoting Confucius. "And I haven't worked for the past eight years."

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Award winner Peter Ndiang'ui of Oasis High School accepts congratulations from Janet Deile during the Second Annual Lighthouse Award Ceremony at Cape Harbour on Thursday May 20, 2010. Eleven teachers were honored for their contribution to charter schools in Cape Coral. (John David Emmett/news-press.com)

#### Distinguished teachers of the year

- Christa McAuliffe Elementary  
Dawn Combs, fourth grade, and Theresa Beuerle, kindergarten
- Oasis Charter Elementary  
Tiffany Drendall, kindergarten, and Stacie Worley, fifth grade
- Oasis Charter Middle  
Crystal Hanhurst, sixth grade math, John Culhane, sixth grade social studies
- Oasis Charter High  
Barbara Jamison, ninth through 11th grade math

#### 2010 Lighthouse Award recipients

Christa McAuliffe Elementary  
Name: Susi Kelly  
Age: 48  
Years teaching: Eight  
Current level: Fifth grade  
Education history: Associate's in English literature, 1996; bachelor's in psychology, 2002; master's in elementary education, 2004

Oasis Charter Elementary  
Name: Kimberly Lucas  
Age: 34  
Years teaching: 12

Current level: second grade  
Education history: associate's in general education, 1995; bachelor's in elementary education and exceptional student education, 2001

Oasis Charter Middle  
Name: John Omundsen  
Age: 24  
Years teaching: Two  
Current level: Eighth to 11th grade math  
Education history: Bachelor's in math, 2007; master's in math education, 2008

Oasis High  
Name: Peter Ndiang'ui  
Age: 54  
Years teaching: 33  
Current level: Ninth to 11th grade geography and leadership skills development  
Education history: Bachelor's in education; master's in educational leadership and geography; working on education specialist degree

#### Photo Galleries

- Lighthouse Award Ceremony

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Your daughter insists on wearing her princess costume to the grocery store. Allow it or not?

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**NO, I have some rules!**

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