

EDUCATION

Brown honored by Illinois State Board of Education

BY DAVID BELCHER

MT. VERNON LIFESTYLES EDITOR

MT. VERNON — Being a business manager is generally not the type of job which attracts public recognition or praise.

Jane Brown recently received statewide recognition and praise for her performance as Mt. Vernon Township High School business manager.

Brown received an Award of Recognition from the Illinois State Board of Education for her "exceedingly exceptional dedication," according to a school statement.

Shirilyn Holt, MVTHS administrative assistant who, along with former MVTHS Superintendent Terry Milt nominated Brown for the honor, said she is "pretty sure she's the first person from Mt. Vernon High School to be nominated and win an award."

Holt said she nominated Brown for the state's Those Who Excel education award program because she thought, "She deserved recognition for her support of programs here at the school."

"Ecstatic, surprised and deeply honored," is how Brown described her reaction to the award, which she received at a banquet at the Pere Marquette Hotel in Peoria.

The Danville native came to Mt. Vernon in 1979 when her then-husband took a job in the area. She has never left.

"The people are awesome," she said of Mt. Vernon. "I grew up in a bigger town. My daughters both went to Dodds [Grade School] for kindergarten to eighth grade. I like the small town aspect of living in Mt. Vernon."

She got an associate degree in business and accounting in 1987 from Rend Lake College in Ina and went to work as a bookkeeper. She took a job as part-time secretary and bookkeeper at McClellan Grade School in 1992. As is common with most small schools, she was forced to wear a number of hats. In addition to her secretarial and bookkeeping chores, she also served as yearbook sponsor and when necessary filled in as nurse, kitchen worker and classroom aide.

She moved to Sum-



Sentinel Photo/DAVID BELCHER

ISBE HONOR — Jane Brown, LEFT, Mt. Vernon Township High School business manager, recently received an Award of Recognition from the Illinois State Board of Education. Joining Brown and is MVTHS Administrative Assistant Shirilyn Holt who, along with former MVTHS Superintendent Terry Milt, nominated Brown for the honor.

mersville Grade School in 2003, where she worked for four months before accepting her current position.

Some of Brown's duties include assisting with the budget, overseeing payroll and accounts payable, free and reduced lunch applications, not to mention preparing a number of reports to the ISBE and the Internal Revenue Service.

Brown stresses it is not a one-person operation. She credited Trish Wagner, payroll; and Raelyn Caps, accounts payable; for "making my job easier."

"All of the people are great to work with," she said of MVTHS. "This is a good school, good people. The kids are great. The staff is great."

During her work at schools she also found time to be a student. She joined her daughter as a student in Southern Illinois University at Carbondale's weekend program and earned a bachelor's degree in workforce education. Mother and daughter received their diploma on the same day.

She went on to receive her master's degree from SIU-C. As if that is not enough, she is on track to receive her master of business administration degree from McKendree University in May.

Degrees in hand, she will be eligible to apply for

school business official endorsement through the ISBE.

However, not all went smoothly.

Her daughter, Jessica Hanke, was diagnosed with a brain tumor. After it was removed, it came back two years later.

Then, in May 2007, Brown was diagnosed with breast cancer. Brown reported she was recently released from Dr. Yagnesh Oza's care and will have to go back for a check-up in four months.

MVTHS is truly a family affair for the Brown family.

Her husband, Joe Brown, is a MVTHS custodian.

One daughter, Hanke, is plant supervisor and attendance office secretary and another daughter, Heather Beckley, works at the Mt. Vernon YMCA Daycare. She also has "four beautiful grandsons." In addition, she has a stepdaughter, Lisa Hill, who lives in Florida and a stepson, Aaron Brown, who lives in Breese; a stepgrandson and stepgranddaughter.

Holt praised Brown for the "way she handled herself through adversity. She kept on task every day, even with cancer treatments and her daughter's tumors. Through all of that, she came to school and worked."

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