WASHINGTON, D.C.] A mathematics professor at New River Community and Technical College who has dedicated her career to improving the quality of mathematics education at all levels has been named West Virginia’s 2008 “Professor of the Year.” The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) has announced that Dr. Lucie T. Refsland was selected for the honor from nearly 300 top professors in the United States.

The award recognizes those who excel as educators and influence the lives and careers of their students. Refsland received the award at a luncheon in Washington, DC, on Thursday, Nov. 20.

In his letter of nomination, Dr. Ted D. Spring, president of New River, stated, “As New River’s first faculty member to reach the rank of full professor, Dr. Refsland has worked to inspire her students to be the best they can be, both academically and professionally.”

Refsland advises students and serves as advisor to the college’s chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, the premier honor society for two-year colleges. She has instituted mathematics lab access for all students as well as specialized tutorial sessions for students entering and progressing in the teacher education program. More than 50 of her former students are now certified as middle school mathematics teachers.
In a letter of support for Refsland’s nomination, Charles W. Callison, personnel director for Greenbrier County Schools stated: “I have personally witnessed a dramatic improvement in the quality of mathematics education teachers as a result of her efforts. These graduates are well schooled in inquiry-based mathematics, technology integration and best practices in mathematics instruction. It is critical to improving mathematics instruction that our county have well-trained, knowledgeable and competent elementary and middle school mathematics instructors in our system. Dr. Refsland has been dedicated to this goal.”

Former student Amy Kessler, now a middle school science teacher, spoke of Refsland’s exceptional rapport with students of all ages and backgrounds. “She exhibits a nurturing, caring presence which influenced my ultimate desire to begin working with students in the same manner she worked with me. Her talent at teaching both simple and complex math concepts, her ability to connect with her students is extraordinary. It is well known on campus that one must produce the work to get the grade in Dr. Refsland’s class. Slackers beware!” Kessler said.

Refsland has written or collaborated on over $2 million in grants dedicated to the teaching of mathematics. She has helped upgrade mathematics education pedagogy in K-12 schools and at the college level and has worked in cooperation with the West Virginia Department of Education toward this goal. She has led workshops in Australia, China, Japan and Norway and was an exchange professor at the Heibei Teachers College, Shijiazhuang, China for six months in 1993.

Refsland joined the faculty of Greenbrier Community College Center, now the Greenbrier Valley Campus of New River Community and Technical College, in 1988. She has held the rank of professor since 2001 and is the senior ranking faculty member of New River.

A resident of Lewisburg, Refsland holds a bachelor’s degree in mathematics education from West Virginia University, a master’s degree in education administration from Duke University and a doctorate in mathematics education from Virginia Tech.

“Dr. Refsland represents the best of our profession,” Spring commented. “Because of her commitment and generosity to the profession, she has created an
atmosphere for learning that has truly changed lives and will impact generations to come."

This year, there are Professor of the Year winners in 44 states, the District of Columbia and Guam. CASE assembled two preliminary panels of judges to select finalists. The Carnegie Foundation then convened the third and final panel, which selected four national winners. CASE and Carnegie select state winners from top entries resulting from the judging process. Refsland was selected from faculty members nominated by colleges and universities throughout the country.

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching was founded in 1905 by Andrew Carnegie “to do all things necessary to encourage, uphold and dignify the profession of teaching.” The foundation is the only advanced-study center for teachers in the world and the third-oldest foundation in the nation. Its nonprofit research activities are conducted by a small group of distinguished scholars.

The Council for Advancement and Support of Education is the largest international association of education institutions, serving more than 3,400 universities, colleges, schools, and related organizations in 61 countries. CASE is the leading resource for professional development, information, and standards in the fields of educational fundraising, communications, marketing and alumni relations.

CASE and the Carnegie Foundation have been partners in offering Professors of the Year recognition since 1981. TIAA-CREF, one of America's leading financial services organizations and higher education's premier retirement system, became the primary sponsor for the awards ceremony in 2000. Additional support for the program is received from a number of higher education associations, including Phi Beta Kappa.

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