When Cathy Cartier was a young girl, she didn’t dream of becoming a teacher. She fantasized about becoming a great writer. And then she landed a job as a social worker right after college. It wasn’t until she began her own family that the teaching bug bit her.

Cartier, who is now an English teacher at Affton (Mo.) High School, has been
named the 2012-13 Missouri Teacher of the Year by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The announcement came last week during a new school year assembly in the Affton School District.

“I was so surprised when my superintendent announced that I was the Missouri Teacher of the Year,” she said. “When he introduced some special guests – my family – I knew that he was about to give me some incredible news! We have so many great teachers in the Affton School District, and I am sure throughout the state of Missouri, who could just as easily be in this position. It is an awesome responsibility to represent them all.”

Cartier earned her bachelor’s degree in psychology in 1977 from the University of Missouri–St. Louis and began a career in social service.

“Shortly after that, I was asked by board members to join the staff of the private school affiliated with my church,” she said. “That really began my teaching career. My most important teaching job came when I started raising a family. I stayed home until I began subbing in the Affton School District in order to see exactly what the public schools had to offer my own children.”

Cartier has taught in the Affton School District for the past nine years, where she has served as curriculum co-chair for English language arts and spearheaded preparation for the school’s end-of-course testing. She returned to UMSL to earn her master’s degree in secondary education in 2007.

“My experiences at UMSL have prepared me well for my life in the classroom,” said Cartier, who currently serves as a teacher consultant for the Gateway Writing Project at UMSL, a conference for teachers.

“The fact that Cathy Cartier is an excellent classroom teacher is evident in her selection as Missouri State Teacher of the Year. However, she is also a gifted teacher-leader, one who is willing to share her expertise with others and one who leads by example,” said Nancy Singer, associate professor of K-12 education at UMSL and Gateway Writing Project director.

Cartier attributes her success as a teacher to two things – student relationships and achievement.

“I am a lifelong learner and I recognize the importance of building relationships...
with my students,” she said. “Coming into my public school career late in life, I have been in classes working on degrees and certificates for the past 11 years. I have been taught so much by my colleagues in the district and beyond. I was fortunate to have some great mentors.

“Secondly, I know that students achieve so much more in class when they trust and respect their teacher,” she said. “Building relationships with the students that I interact with everyday is an ongoing and often challenging task, but it is always foremost in my mind. I know that I can set the bar high if they know that I am on their side.”

Cartier will represent Missouri in the National Teacher of the Year competition later this year.

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