

Teacher Spotlight



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CHRISTINE SMALL

God got her into teaching.

Christine Small doesn't have any other reason for getting into the profession because she wasn't a good student and, in fact, failed algebra in high school.

"I was more into having fun. Never was I academic at all," she said with a laugh. "The fact that I am a teacher – and according to so many teachers, quite a successful teacher – might just be astounding to people who knew me as a youth."

Small, 52, is a third-grade instructor at Christ Lutheran School in La Mesa. She was recently named Teacher of the Year by the Pacific Southwest District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, which includes schools in Southern California, Arizona and Nevada. Principal Xavria Schwarz was named the district's Administrator of the Year, the first time both titles have gone to the same school in the same year.

"I realize there are many, many excellent teachers in the Lutheran school system, but to be given a recognition and

award... I'm humbled and grateful," Small said.

Small is the third of five children; her father was a preacher. Though she liked to have fun, she took college credits during high school, finished junior college and her four year degree early and went on to a teachers college. The classes for becoming a teacher were simple for her, and she liked children, so it seemed like the right fit.

She loves her work because it's never the same. There are always new students, and third-graders are always "bubbling with ideas and energy." It can be tiring, but that's also a good thing because it means she's having fun.

The challenge for Small is making sure she's getting her students prepared – teaching them to be responsible, have a good work ethic, do well in the fourth grade and be productive adults.

- Lisa Deaderick