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FASNY honors Germantown principal

By Faith Burkins-Gimzek

Germantown Elementary School Principal Susan Brown received the Firemen's Association of the State of New York Teacher of the Year Award during a June 2 ceremony at her school in Columbia County June 2.

The trophy is bestowed annually to educators who encourage and promote fire prevention and safety.

"When I got the phone call I was very, very surprised," Brown said with a chuckle. "I said, 'wait a minute, you're sure you're talking to the right person?' But it's a real honor."

Brown has 18 years of experience as an educator, previously serving as a teacher and assistant principal in the Hudson City School District, also in Columbia County.

In 2008, Brown held a school assembly, which has now become a yearly tradition, called "promoting the understanding of the value and need for home smoke detectors." Local firefighters from the Germantown Hose Co. No. 1, who nominated her for the award, demonstrate in the school assembly each year how to "stop, drop and roll" and teach the importance of planning a home fire escape route with parents.

Brown also conducted a school survey to find out if any of the students' homes had only one, or were without, home smoke detectors.

"I believe it's very important because it can save lives," she said about teaching fire safety. "Children carry home the message, which hopefully begins what we like to call a family meeting. ... And the children are very interested in this kind of information. Hopefully, it can save a life."

The previous award recipient was Gail Carrier of the Holy Ghost Lutheran School in Wheatfield, Niagara County.

FASNY supports and serves volunteer fire services in New York, its firefighters, and the public they protect through education, legislation, communication, recognition and community service.