

## **Ruth Mills voted WREA Educator of the Year!**

Ruth Mills, who has been a Fashion and Interior Design Instructor at Whittier Regional Technical High School for the past **35 years** has been voted Whittier Regional Education Association's (WREA) Educator of the Year.



She was selected for this award by a vote of the WREA's 126 members. The award has been presented annually for 26 years. Ruth will receive a plaque as well as a monetary award during this, our end-of-year ceremony.

Ruth has watched the fashion/interior design area at Whittier grow from a few home sewing machines to an area filled with state-of-the-art equipment. Dozens of industrial sewing machines and other specialty machines, including a computer-aided design system for pattern-making, fill her classroom.

Commenting on her career here, she said, "I've always felt our kids who go on to college programs have a great start. It's always nice when you bump into them and you see them out there in the industry and think, 'we started them here and they've really made it.' "

Ruth arrived at Whittier as a new, 22-year-old teacher in 1974, shortly after the school opened. She has worked with hundreds of teachers and dozens of administrators during her tenure.

She said, "There are so many people here with so much energy. I've just been kind of a steady. I feel very fortunate to have been here all these years working alongside the many different teachers and administrators."

Vocational-Technical Coordinator Beverly DeSalvo said, "Ruth is very dedicated to her trade and has always been a team player. She is well-deserving of this honor."

Fashion/Interior Design Instructor Lisa Tavares, who has worked beside Ruth for the past 14 years, had this to say about her:

"Ruth has been my mentor since day one. She has been the go-to person and my advisor for the past 14 years. She always lends a hand when you need it or a shoulder to lean on. In and outside of school, she is known for her kind, caring, understanding personality.

"Her teaching qualities include her ability to be diverse, adapt to new educational initiatives and incorporate new technologies into the classroom. Also, she knew how to be fair, but firm with the students. She set high standards and expectations for them that were attainable, and she was a strong advocate for her students to further their education. She has been an example for me to follow as both a person and a teacher."

Ruth will retire in October and is looking forward to a change. "I'm excited," she said.

“I’ve been doing the same thing for a long time. I want to do something different but continue to make a difference somehow.”

To prepare for her career as a teacher, Ruth earned her bachelor’s degree from UMASS, her masters at Salem State University and has done additional coursework at Fitchburg State, Lesley College and other institutions of higher learning.

Ruth and her husband Bob live in Amesbury, and have raised four children, Rob, 33, Todd, 30, Amy, 27 and Lindsay, 21. They also love spending time with their four grandchildren.

Ruth enjoys reading, many different kinds of arts and crafts projects, biking, working out at a gym and spectator sports, especially those of her children.