

## Debbie Calvino—Hobbit Mathematician Extraordinaire

Debbie Calvino's list of accomplishments in and out of the classroom is extraordinary—which means, of course, that she is ordinary in an “extra” sort of way. Debbie has always wanted to be ordinary since the day that she courageously left the Shire to live among the “big” people. While enthusiastically struggling to be a productive member of a new world, Debbie has consistently accomplished the ordinary in a most extraordinary way. A list of Debbie's accomplishments include:

- 27 years of teaching young ones to add and subtract without using their fingers and toes—although, in fairness, this would have been a more noteworthy accomplishment if it had been successfully implemented in the Shire where feet are generally exposed year round, making the toes an easily accessible calculating tool.
- 5 years as the Math Department Chair and Supervisor—leading a department of big people has helped hobbits everywhere to believe that they can succeed in the world of big people as well.

But what is most extraordinary about Debbie Calvino is her ability to lead while gaining the respect and loyalty of her colleagues, parents, students, building administration, central office management and members of the Board of Education

In more recent years, Debbie has been honored for her successful efforts of putting all children center by being awarded the 2008 SUNY New Paltz Dean's Award for Excellence in Teaching. Her most recent accomplishment, being named the 2010 New York State Teacher of the Year, has effectively shattered barriers that most considered unbreakable. Even having elected a first-time minority US president pales in comparison to the mind-boggling social changes that have taken place in Western-Earth, paving the way for a humble hobbit to be not only accepted and recognized on a par with big people, but also for having accomplished what other big people could not. This honor is likely to be the catalyst that finally unifies the many species of our land. In fact, I hear that the extraterrestrial aliens of Pine Bush have even opened up a dialogue with neighboring Shires and Villages. Perhaps the Gnomes of Goshen and the Wraths of Walden will soon follow suit.

Debbie's involvement in the field of education has been diverse. She is a master teacher and mentor to both new and veteran teachers. Her leadership of the Math Department has resulted in excellent state assessment results. In addition to her experiences teaching math and special education, Debbie has also served as a class advisor, member of the Gradius Honoris selection committee and is a respected leader of the District's new Accountability Task Force.

All of these accomplishments may seem somewhat daunting to our new members who must fear that they will never be able to measure up to such high expectations. There is, however, a secret to Debbie's success that I will share with this group of local friends who are here to honor her this evening. The SED rubric for determining this year's NYSTOTY recipient provided Debbie with some distinct advantages. Vertically challenged people automatically received five bonus points on this year's rubric. Unfortunately, Debbie subsequently lost some of these points. The love of her life, Sam, being 5'9" and, therefore, clearly a “big person” necessitated a deduction of 2 of these 5 points. A second advantage provided to Debbie was the 10 *other species* bonus points provided by the SED in an attempt to make this year's teacher of the year submission more diverse and inclusive of all living creatures—big and small. Hobbits clearly qualify, bringing Debbie's pre-submission bonus points to 13. Finally, because mathematicians tend to be somewhat socially delayed and culturally reclusive, the SED added an additional 5 bonus points for math teacher candidates, fully expecting these very traits to prevent or at least limit the candidacy of mathematicians.

How could the SED have foreseen any candidate meeting the criteria of all three bonus point categories? Adding the 3 points for the vertically challenged, 10 points for qualifying for *other species* recognition and 5 points for the inherent disadvantages of being a math person, Debbie had accumulated 18 points before the judges ever read the application materials. Considering that 20 points is a perfect score, Debbie only needed to earn 2 points on her application materials to win. In fact, if Debbie had not lost 2 points for marrying Sam, she would have won by simply placing her name on the application and sending it in. One might suspect that Debbie's cousin, Frodo (see family photo), and personal friend, Gandalf the Gray, were members of the SED's Teacher of the Year Screening Committee this year.

Mrs. Debra Calvino has been and continues to be an ideal ambassador for the face of public education. Her actions promote what is admirable about our profession. Debbie epitomizes everything that is good and honorable about the teaching profession. Her personality, work ethic and leadership abilities afford her the trust, respect and, therefore, the success for which we all strive. Debbie is our New York State Teacher of the Year and we are very proud of her.

Tim Brown, VCTA President

## **Debbie Calvino: Western-Earth's VCTA Hobbit-Warrior-Mathematician Extraordinaire**

