

2015 GMTA TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Jan Adams



The recipient of the 2015 GMTA Teacher of the Year Award is Jan E. Adams, NCTM. Jan Adams has been on staff at the University of West Georgia since 1993. She has been the staff accompanist since that time and is currently instructor of Keyboard Skills. Jan came to what was then West Georgia College in Carrollton (now the University of West Georgia) in 1974, as a student. She received both her undergraduate and graduate degrees in Piano Performance from West Georgia, where she studied with Betty Tolbert-Smith. While in college, she was a finalist in the GMTA Auditions and winner of the concerto competition, performing the Schumann A Minor Concerto with the Orchestra. Her professor of Accompanying and Keyboard Literature remembers her as a student who displayed continuous musical growth throughout her undergraduate and graduate degrees. After her student days, Jan continued to perform as a staff accompanist at UWG. Any student or faculty member accompanied by Jan can always rely on her careful preparation and complete dependability in performance.

Mrs. Adams has been a valuable member of the Western Georgia Music Teachers Association for many years. She is currently the treasurer, though she has served in all

WGMTA positions, always with efficiency and grace. In her work with GMTA as Vice President for Auditions (three different terms), she showed these same characteristics. Currently she is serving as MTNA Junior Piano Chairman for Georgia Music Teachers Association. Other previous GMTA positions include Certification Secretary, MTNA Foundation Chair, and Vice-President of Spring Auditions. She has adjudicated numerous festivals and auditions in Georgia and South Carolina.

We have great respect for Jan as a piano teacher. She has taught privately for more than 30 years in Carrollton. The past seven years she has taught students through West Georgia's Honors Academy. Her students in WGMTA recitals and Auditions are always meticulously prepared. Their high ratings in GMTA Theory Tests show that Jan is teaching the complete knowledge of music and not just repertoire during the year. At the GMTA State Conference in November of 2015, she presented a lecture entitled "The Right Bait", in which she gave us insight into how she selects repertoire to inspire her students. Many of them have become music majors in college, and several are now out teaching, both as private piano teachers and in public schools.

Jan has always been a highly visible part of the music community in Carrollton, GA, not only through her work at UWG and as a private teacher, but also as accompanist for the Carroll County Community Chorus since 1981.

Mrs. Adams has served as accompanist for the Carroll County Community Chorus for the past 30 years and also for West Georgia's Concert Choir. As a sign of the high regard in which she is held, the choral rehearsal room in the Carrollton Cultural Arts Building was named the Jan Adams Choral Room.

There are many more things that we could mention about Jan (such as her work with Tanner Hospital Healing for Health program, her involvement with the Piano Guild and the National Federation of Music Clubs, and that she is a member of American College of Musicians where she serves as chairman of the Carrollton chapter) but most importantly we want to convey how highly we esteem her as a musician and as a remarkable human being. We are thrilled to honor Jan as the 2015 GMTA Teacher of the Year!

Our 2015 Teacher of the Year was nominated by George Mann, NCTM.

Special thanks:

Martha Thomas, NCTM, 2012 GMTA Teacher of the Year

LaNelle Nash, NCTM, 2013 GMTA Teacher of the Year

Susan E. Naylor, NCTM, 2014 GMTA Teacher of the Year

2015 GMTA Teacher of the Year Selection Committee

Contributing to Jan's nomination and this article:

Carter Culwell (former student)

Dawn McCord, NCTM (Colleague, Associate Professor of Music Education & Organ, University of West Georgia)

George Mann, NCTM (former teacher, Adjunct Instructor of Piano, Lagrange College and former Professor of Music, University of West Georgia)

Rebekah Healan (GMTA President-Elect)

Georgia Music Teachers Association
Teacher of the Year, 2015-16 – Jan Adams
Teaching Tips

I am blessed at having a job which I love. I tell people I never go to work – I go to play. I look forward to each day of teaching with its challenges and joys. Every day is different because all students are different. My goal for each student is for lessons to be challenging, yet enjoyable. I want them to meet me 20 years later and tell me how much they still enjoy playing the piano, whether they have made music their career or if they are doctors, rocket scientists, custodians, fishermen or well drillers, etc.

1. Love teaching your students and let them see that love through your enthusiasm and interest in them. Make each student feel special by being interested in their lives. If you let them know you care for them, they are more likely to do anything you ask.
2. A good teacher is one who is always learning. Don't be afraid to try new repertoire or teaching ideas that aren't within your comfort zone. Learn new music – take lessons or music classes. Read books about music. Attend workshops and local association and state meetings.
3. Choose at least 3 colleagues as close friends – a) an older and wiser teacher who can offer advice and encouragement; b) a younger teacher to mentor; c) one similar to you in age and teaching level. It was very helpful to me as a young teacher to get advice and discuss musical ideas with my mother (who was my first piano teacher).
4. Offer many performance opportunities for your students such as GMTA Auditions, Guild Auditions, Federation, etc. These events provide goals for your students to strive toward. They have a reason to practice!
5. Include theory in your piano lesson. It is so important for students to understand what they are playing. Analyze the form and harmonic structure of each piece. Memory is easier when they understand and see these concepts in their repertoire. Don't give up – one day they will see it too.
6. Teach music you enjoy. Keep looking for new literature rather than the same old pieces you have taught for years. You don't have to teach every piece in the book!
7. Choose repertoire for each student that fits their personality as well as their ability. Let them have a choice of selected repertoire. They like being a part of the decision making process.
8. Have at least three levels of repertoire: a) a challenge piece – something that may be beyond their ability; b) a piece on their level; c) a piece that reviews concepts learned. For older students, try to have in each week's assignment a piece that is new, one they have been working on and a review piece. Too many new pieces can cause frustration and too many older pieces can result in boredom. If you find a piece isn't working for a student, it's okay to admit that. Suggest putting it aside for later.
9. Be a teacher, but also a friend. We hold a special relationship of one-on-one time with our students. Use that time wisely to teach, but also to ask about their week. Be genuinely interested in their activities and problems outside of piano.
10. Treat beginners with as much care and importance as your advanced students.
11. Offer group lessons or performance classes in order to prepare for recitals and other performances. Have fun and be creative. I have an October group where the younger students play Halloween music and come in costumes. One year they came in their pajamas. Always include food. Parents are usually glad to help.

12. Get involved in your community. You or your students can perform at nursing homes or hospitals. We offer a Harmony for Healing program at our local hospital for musicians to perform. My students and I have been involved in this program each month. I have accompanied our community chorus for 30 years. I have become known in the community and acquired many students through this program. These are great ways to recruit students with free advertising.

13. Communicate well with parents. There are at least three people involved when taking piano – the teacher, the students and the parents. Text messaging saves me so much time. I can group message reminders to parents of group lessons, recitals, festivals, etc. I am sure I have contacted them this way. And I always get a response!

14. Interview each new student. Be sure they are interested in taking lessons – not just their parents. Ask about outside activities to determine if they will have time to practice. It's great to have a waiting list.

15. Have long and short term goals for each student. A short term goal may be memorizing a piece that month or learning the Scales of Bb, Eb, and Ab that month. A long-term goal may be planning a program in order to achieve the Guild High School Diploma by their senior year.

16. Prepare weekly lesson plans but be flexible. Be prepared for those times when they have had busy weeks due to drama productions, mid-terms, deaths, etc. For those days, concentrate on sightreading, theory or ensemble playing.

17. Be enthusiastic and excited about teaching music to such a great group of students.