

NEVER



*Virginia sitting in her office with her oboe. Behind her is a quilt made by the mother of a student who had studied oboe with Virginia for several years.*

## For 30 Years This Outstanding Music Educator Has

# BLOWN HER OWN HORN

Thirty years is a long time to be doing anything, and for many, such a long-term endeavor can lead to burnout. But for Southern Utah University Music professor **Virginia Stitt**, 30 seems to be the magic number, as she was recently named the Utah Music Educators Association's (UMEA) Outstanding Educator for 2007.

Stitt has been working in music education at SUU since 1977, and over the years, her quiet guidance and love of the craft has impacted countless students—many of whom have gone on to teach music, extending Virginia's impact far beyond her expectations.

According to one such former student, Cedar High School Band Director **Steve Shirts**, the UMEA's recognition of Stitt's talent and hard work is long overdue. States Shirts, "Virginia is a gem that has been kept secret from a lot of people across the state. Her students and colleagues in southern Utah have always known of her brilliance, but she likes to fly under the radar, so it's taken a while for word to spread."

Shirts, who also chairs UMEA's Awards Committee, was not surprised Stitt's name surfaced after calling for nominations in UMEA's quarterly journal in 2007. Stitt has been serving

as a mentor for Shirts since she first gave him private lessons in high school, and she now teaches Shirts' daughter in music classes at SUU.

Yet even knowing all he did about the quality of Virginia's work, Shirts was still surprised by the number of nominations his longtime mentor received during the awards selection process. States Shirts, "Virginia received 12 or 13 nominations from her colleagues. It's impossible to deny the impact Virginia has had on music education across the state."

The UMEA annual awards serve as statewide recognition of those music educators whose efforts have most impacted their students and peers. With just one person named as the overall music educator each year, Virginia joins an elite group of teachers who work far beyond their required responsibilities to improve music education throughout the state.

While honored, Virginia best describes her sentiment for such recognition as "humbling." States Stitt, "I know a lot of the people that are teaching across the state, and I know all the amazing things they do. It's very humbling to be singled out amidst so many great teachers."

In fact, Stitt may be the only

person surprised by this recognition. According to **Bill Byrnes**, Dean of SUU's College of Performing and Visual Arts, "Dr. Stitt is a dedicated teacher who makes a major difference in the lives of her current students, and her influence as a faculty member extends to countless SUU alumni." Byrnes continues, "I can't think of a colleague more deserving of this recognition."

SUU president **Michael Benson**, a music aficionado and long-time supporter of music education throughout the state, agrees, stating, "This is a very well-deserved award for a very committed and dedicated faculty member. Our students are the beneficiaries of Dr. Stitt and her many abilities and talents."

Many of Virginia's colleagues, students and friends attended the UMEA awards ceremony in St. George on February 1, where Virginia received formal recognition by her peers.

The Utah Music Educators Association is open to all music educators in both public and private institutions from Pre-K to college level in the state of Utah. UMEA is dedicated to improving existing music programs and creating opportunities for learning and growth in the field.