

National Education Association Foundation

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

California Educator Receives Top Honor and \$25,000 at the NEA Foundation's Awards Gala

WASHINGTON, D.C. — On Friday night here, at the NEA Foundation's Salute to Excellence in Education Gala, Kimberley Gilles, an educator at Monte Vista High School in Danville in the Bay Area, received one of public education's top honors: the NEA Member Benefits Award for Teaching Excellence and \$25,000.

Known as the Academy Awards of public education, the National Education Association Foundation's gala is an annual celebration of the men and women who work in America's public schools. The NEA Foundation presented nearly 40 awards to exceptional educators and dedicated supporters of public education over the course of the program. Gilles is a veteran teacher in the San Ramon Valley Unified School District and a member of the San Ramon Valley Education Association.

"Gilles has been selected for this award by her peers because she has attained the highest teaching standards, as illustrated by her exemplary instruction, advocacy for the profession and staunch support of public education," said Harriet Sanford, President and CEO of the NEA Foundation. "In her classroom, she shares her passion for social justice to inspire students to lift up their own voices through reading and writing."

Gilles was nominated for the award by the California Teachers Association, and is one of 36 public school educators nominated by their state education associations who were also honored. The 325,000-member CTA is an affiliate of the 3.2 million-member NEA. Gilles also won a [CTA Human Rights Award](#) in 2012 for her classroom curriculum focusing on bigotry and social justice issues.

In November, when it was announced that Gilles' had also won a national \$10,000 Horace Mann Award For Teaching Excellence, CTA President Dean E. Vogel praised her emphasis on social justice issues and diversity. "Part of Kimberley's great ability in teaching is her attention to diversity. Diversity is integrated into the text books she chooses, the music she selects, the model essays she presents, and even the decor of her classroom."

Vogel was in Washington Friday night to be with Gilles at the awards ceremony, along with CTA Vice President Eric Heins and Secretary-Treasurer Mikki Cichocki-Semo.

Gilles' students have already benefited from her award. Last fall, they received digital arts training, which they used to create an original video honoring their teacher. Watch the student-made video, which premiered at the gala, [here](#). The video, done in the format of the "Law and Order" television show, highlights Gilles' social justice and community work and includes praise from CTA President Vogel.

Phylicia Rashad, a Tony Award-winning actress, singer, stage director, and educator, hosted the gala event. Rashad was nominated for two Emmy Awards for her role as Claire Huxtable on "The Cosby Show" and became the first African-American actress to win a Tony Award for a dramatic leading role.

This year's event featured performances by nearly 80 elementary through high school students from Montgomery County (MD) Public Schools. Student performers took the more than 800 national education leaders and supporters in attendance on a journey around the globe with cultural performances from salsa dancing, madrigal singing, and African drumming, to a finale performance joined by Rashad.

The Foundation and its guests also celebrated their teachers, who received on-stage recognition. Photos of Gilles at the gala Friday night are on the CTA Facebook page [here](#).

Gilles was one of [five national finalists](#) for the top award; all five finalists received special recognition at the gala, the Horace Mann Award for Teaching Excellence, and \$10,000.

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The NEA Foundation is a public charity supported by contributions from educators' dues, corporate sponsors, and others. We support student success by helping public school educators work with key partners to build strong systems of shared responsibility. The NEA Foundation's Salute to Excellence in Education Gala is a national celebration of the men and women who work in America's public schools. At this annual event, the Foundation recognizes and promotes excellence in teaching and advocacy for the profession. The NEA Foundation and the National Education Association jointly present the awards with support from NEA Member Benefits, The Horace Mann Educator Corporation, Pearson Charitable Foundation, California Casualty, Promethean, Bank of America, and Security Benefit.