

## **Academy teacher named 2008 International Educator**

By PAMELA WILLIS

Published: Tuesday, February 19, 2008

After a decade of coordinating the East Asian Studies program, Columbus Academy teacher Kyle Tong was named 2008 International Educator of the Year.

Tong, a Gahanna resident, was honored by the Columbus Council on World Affairs at a ceremony Tuesday, Feb. 19 at the Greater Columbus Convention Center.

"I was surprised and very honored," he said. "An alum from the school nominated me and suggested I should be considered for the award."

Two seniors, John Razi and Courtney Miller, introduced Tong at the ceremony, he said.



The East Asian Studies Program has been in place at Columbus Academy for 10 years.

Columbus Academy teacher Kyle Tong was named 2008 International Educator of the Year by the Columbus Council on World Affairs Tuesday, Feb. 19. Tong coordinates Academy's East Asian Studies program, which includes opportunities for exchange students.

"We have an exchange program of teachers and students with Japan and India and with Hefei, China, to enrich the language and cultural learning of our students, and in support of our seventh through 12th grade Chinese language program," Tong said, who has taught history at Columbus Academy since 1994.

Over the past 10 years, Columbus Academy has sent nearly 100 students and 25 faculty members to China, India and Japan, Tong said.

"As the proliferation of Chinese language instruction spreads in school districts across the

country, Tong is increasingly in demand as an expert consultant for ensuring that proper mechanisms are in place for other schools' exchange programs," said Bob Lee, Academy's director of communications.

Tong said the exchange program has proved valuable to students and teachers.

"I think the exchange program is an opportunity for students and adults, but primarily for students, to have direct experience in China and Japan and to not only learn about their cultures, but to apply their language abilities," Tong said. "We also have students and faculty members from China spend time at Academy as well, which benefits our entire school."

Tong earned his bachelor's degree at Bowdoin College in Maine and his masters in education at Springfield College, in Massachusetts.

Before teaching at Academy, Tong taught in schools in Massachusetts, California and North Carolina -- a teaching career spanning 25 years so far.

"I have great students, who challenge me every day, with both their intellect and their wanting to discover the world," he said. "They have strong and probing minds."

Teaching upper grades means putting a lot of responsibility on students themselves, Tong said.

"The realization that their education is their own, and not someone else's, is important," he said. "When they make that realization, it becomes a much more personalized effort."

Columbus Academy will continue to seek out global educational opportunities, Tong said.

"One of the missions of the school is global education," he said. "We need to prepare our students for the fact it is an ever-changing world."

Tong also coordinates the Currier Lecture Series at Columbus Academy. Guest speakers have included Mark Mathabane, a South African apartheid survivor and Yolanda King, Martin Luther King's eldest daughter.

"For our lecture series, I look for someone who through his or her life and actions has challenged themselves, looked outside the box and become an agent of positive change," he said.

Tong and his wife Deborah have two children, Conor, 21, and Emily 18, who are both attending Bowdoin College.

Lee said the Columbus Council on World Affairs trustees said they are "strongly committed to supporting educators in the advancement of global understanding and the

reduction of cultural stereotypes.

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--*Kyle Tong*

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