

# Ronald Poplau

Shawnee Mission Northwest School, Shawnee, KS

High School Humanities Education

11th & 12th Grade Community Service



2005 Honorees



## “Marshall

**McLuhan** once observed that when today’s students come to the public school, they actually interrupt their education. Why is that? There has been an explosion

of knowledge that has yet to find its way into classrooms. All too frequently, ‘read and recite, tell and test’ has become the norm in far too many classrooms. This static approach to education threatens to drain the very life from education. My approach to education has attempted to avoid McLuhan’s warning, and over the years, my mission has been focused on six powerful words: **THE DOER OF GOOD BECOMES GOOD!** Years of trial and error, observation, and research brought me to the realization that ultimately students choose what they wish to learn. I agree with McLuhan that there is more to education than desks and textbooks, as the community itself has become the ‘classroom.’ Consequently, in my classes, students present themselves for roll and then depart on a pre-arranged lesson in the community. What is it they do? Some students tutor younger students in ten different schools, some visit the elderly in retirement homes, some clean yards, some deliver food, some even paint houses! They must complete what they have chosen to do or it simply will not get done. It’s as simple as that.”  
– *Ron Poplau*

## “Ron Poplau had a vision; a

vision about a class where students would go out into the community and make a difference; a vision where young people would take what was wrong with our world and help make it right; a vision where the underachievers would be as dedicated and motivated as the overachievers... The Cougars Community Commitment class was not given much hope for survival; most of the staff thought it would fail within a year... But Mr. Poplau didn’t see the problems, he saw the potential. He knew that what many students in his school were missing was the opportunity to see the real world - a world that included people who had real needs, not just unfulfilled wants; a world where parents worried about paying the rent and buying groceries; where homes had no fans in the hot Kansas summer and often no heat in the bitter cold winter. He knew that for these students to become leaders with compassion and foresight, they needed to experience the real world.” – *Margie Burton, parent of former student*



### Other Highlights:

Inductee, National Teachers Hall of Fame

Inductee, Mid-America Education Hall of Fame

Shawnee Citizen of Year (1995)

Sent to Russia for Volunteer Program, requested by the U.S. State Department

*The Doer of Good Becomes Good: a Primer on Volunteerism* (Published March 2005)

Years Teaching: 43

Average Class Size: 30

Classes Taught Per Day: 5

School’s Percent of ESL Students: 3

School Type: Public, Suburban

Type of Class: Self-contained