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## BC Prof, Alumna Honored As Teachers

Aleda Johnson / Staff Writer Apr 5, 2017



Courtesy Photo

Meagan Ours (left), a Bridgewater College alumna and Smithland Elementary School teacher, and Jennie Carr, a professor at BC, pose for a photo recognizing

Few things in education are more important than the relationship between a teacher and their pupil.

It encourages the student to reach their full potential while the teacher gains validation for their hard work.

But it's not often when a student-teacher pair are recognized for how they inspire each other.

Bridgewater College alumna Meagan Ours and education professor Jennie Carr got the chance last month at the Virginia Association of Colleges for Teacher Education's conference in Williamsburg.

Ours was a liberal studies and Spanish double major who graduated from Bridgewater in December and now teaches ESL at Smithland Elementary School in Harrisonburg.

The Bridgewater resident was one of a handful of Virginia college students to win a \$1,000 VACTE scholarship for aspiring teachers, a feat that made Ours happy, but didn't surprise Carr.

“Meagan truly deserved this scholarship,” Carr said. “She is exceptional in the classroom, and her passion to serve our local community is undeniable.”

As part of her application, Ours was asked to identify a faculty member who had a significant impact on her.

She chose Carr, who taught two of her education classes at Bridgewater and attended the same church as Ours growing up.

The honor was a touching achievement for Carr.

“I’ve been selected for awards and grants previously by peers and administrative committees,” she said. “However, being recognized by one of our teacher candidates for being a positive influence is the highlight of my career in higher education.”

Carr’s impact on Ours’ success made her an easy pick because she practiced what she preached, modeling how good teachers should act in their classrooms.

“She was always a mentor figure, but the difference was, as a professor, she was really modeling everything that teachers want to aspire to,” Ours said. “So anything she wanted us to do or she wanted to see in us, she did herself.”

For instance, every class period began with Carr greeting each student personally, asking after their well-being and remembering things the student had dealt with in the past.

“She invested in our personal as well as professional and educational selves,” Ours said. “She really cared about the whole student rather than just the student in her classroom.”

Carr, who has been teaching at Bridgewater since 2012, maintains the practice as a core of her teaching philosophy because research has shown the relationships teachers develop with their students directly impact academic performance, motivation, retention and engagement.

“I care about each of my teacher candidates as a person and a future teacher, and I’m intentional about telling them that throughout the semester,” she said. “I want them to know their daily choices as a teacher will impact the lives of their students in the same way my instructional choices have impacted Meagan.”

And Ours has taken the lesson to heart with the almost 100 third graders she works with at Smithland.

“Treating students as whole beings and caring for every aspect of their success — not just educational — and checking on how they’re doing in their home life is a huge part of what I’ve been able to do,” she said.

