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Photo by Frank Pinc/Austin Weekly News

**Delighted:** Austin resident Tracy Kwock is surprised by the traditional basket of apples during the ceremony where she received a Golden Apple Award at KIPP Academy in Austin.

## KIPP Academy teacher gets the Golden Apple

*Austin charter school reading specialist earns one of 10 coveted annual awards for teaching excellence, the first charter school teacher to receive the honor.*

**By DELORES MCCAIN**

Last Wednesday, KIPP: Ascend Charter School (4820 W. Walton) was the place to be, as one of its teachers received a Golden Apple Award. Tracy Kwock, sixth grade reading teacher at KIPP was the honoree.

The surprise ceremony included CEO Arne Duncan, Golden Apple officials, family members, local TV stations and community media. All entered Kwock's room while she was preparing her students for a "pop quiz."

She was startled to say the least and very surprised to see Arne Duncan enter with the traditional basket filled with apples. As Duncan presented her with the basket, her classroom began cheering and clapping.

Students from other rooms filled the hallway as Duncan told her class, "You have a wonderful,

wonderful teacher. She's one 10 teachers, not only in Chicago but in three counties, to get this award. You guys are very lucky to have her as a teacher. You guys got a real star here; you're pretty lucky."

Accepting her award, Tracy told the class, "You guys—what do I always say? 'A good teacher is only as good as their students. So when one of us is wrong ...' [the class recites in unison] 'All will fail.'"

"It's such a great chance for me to be able to not only say thank you for the profession I'm in, but a chance to showcase the school."

**Tracy Kwock,**  
Golden Apple winner

"It's a wonderful thing you have done in allowing me to be your teacher and we've learned a lot this year—and thank you."

Tracy Kwock is the first charter school teacher to be honored with the award since its inception in 1986. She began teaching in 1993 as a Teach For America Corps member in rural Louisiana. She is an 8-year veteran of the Chicago Public Schools and in 2003 became a founding teacher of KIPP Ascend Charter School in the Austin community, where she also resides.

**AWN:** How do you feel about winning this award?

**Tracy:** "Totally knocked me off my feet—wasn't

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## Students explode onto poetry slam scene

*San Miguel sent the youngest participants to the 'Louder than a Bomb' competition in the Loop, but they made a big impression.*

**By ROBERT FELTON**

Six students from San Miguel School-Gary Comer campus (located at 819 N. Leamington Ave.) presented their poetry at the "Louder than a Bomb" poetry competition on March 4.

The annual competition, which is in its fifth year, was organized

by the Young Chicago Authors and allows teens from dozens of schools throughout Chicago to share experiences within their communities with their peers through spoken word.

San Miguel was not only the sole Austin area school competing in the competition, but it was also the only middle school, which especially impressed Adriana Rundle, public relations director of both San Miguel schools (the south side campus is located at 1949 W. 48th St.).

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Photo by Josh Hawkins/Austin Weekly News

**Rhyme time:** Dekeshia Horne recites during a poetry slam in the Chicago Loop.

## Loretto awards 'Spirit of Achievement' to Abe Thompson

*Hospital Foundation's second annual award dinner highlights radio broadcaster and Chicago native for community leadership.*

**By DELORES MCCAIN**

Loretto Hospital Foundation celebrated its 2nd Spirit of Achievement Award Dinner at the Hilton Chicago Hotel March 1. This year's honoree was Chicago native and radio broadcaster Abe Thompson.

The foundation's stated mission is "to honor the outstanding accomplishments of an individual who has demonstrated exceptional commitment and leadership in both his/her professional

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