

**NORFORK** — Mike Seay really cares about his students, is outgoing and has taken Norfolk schools to a whole new level, says Norfolk High School Principal Bobby Hulse. So it's no surprise Seay recently was named Administrator of the Year by the Arkansas Rural Education Association.

The award is based on scoring in four categories, including the school's fiscal stability, facilities, academics and contributions to the association, said AREA president Gerard Cooper.

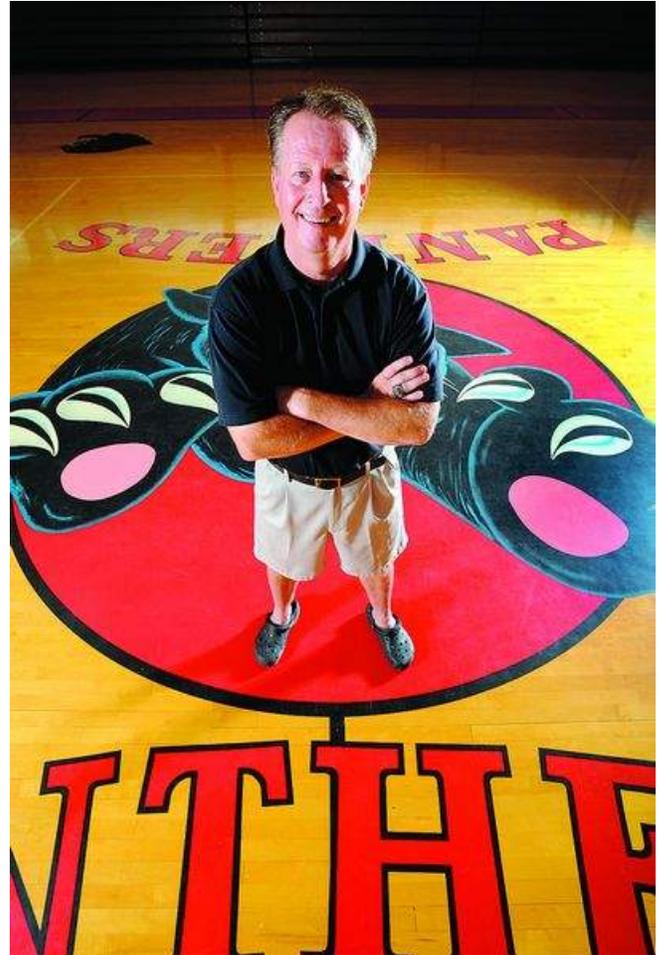
Seay describes the award he received at a meeting last week in Eureka Springs as a shock. A special presentation to Seay will be made tonight during a Norfolk School Board meeting.

Seay says the school has become competitive on many levels, including teacher's salaries, facilities and the biggest issue — academics.

The high morale and level of excellence has spread from the principals to teachers to the students, Seay said, adding he and his staff will continue to strive for excellence and continue to improve.

"We have good principals," Seay said. "My role is setting goals and putting them out there. I got an award based on what they did."

While Seay is quick to praise the staff and students for their dedication, Hulse said the school's distinction begins with Seay.



Norfolk Schools superintendent Mike Seay recently was named Administrator of the Year by the Arkansas Rural Education Association. Seay has been superintendent at Norfolk for six years. (Bulletin Photo by Kevin Pieper)

"He takes his work really serious, but he likes to have a lot of fun, too. He likes for things to be done and done right," Hulse said.

A Norfolk student himself, Seay started teaching and coaching at Norfolk in 1982. He taught at different schools for a time and came back to Norfolk six years ago to assume the position of superintendent. This last spring marked Seay's 16th year at the district.

The AREA considers the district's financial state as one of the criteria for the award.

At one time, the Norfolk school district was in the first stages of fiscal distress, but because of Seay's hard work, it is now in good shape, Cooper said.

The facilities also are taken into account.

Last year, voters approved a 2.5-mill increase on property taxes, which will fund a \$1.5 million project to add needed classroom space to the elementary and high school buildings. It also will add a physical education and multipurpose facility at the elementary school and a media center at the high school.

"Norfolk has always had great facilities," Cooper said.

As far as academic standards, the Norfolk School District jumped from 11th place to fourth place in the state during the 2007-2008 school year.

"The school started out pretty mediocre at best when (Seay) first became superintendent. Now they have moved to Golden Apple status," Cooper said.

The academically ranked top 10 schools in Arkansas receive the Golden Apple award.

Contributions to AREA also are studied. Seay has given significant input to AREA's legislative agenda and put in practice new

programs for kids in the district, Cooper said.

"He is an excellent choice for superintendent of the year. If you are going to be a leader, you have to have people following you. He has a vision most people don't have," Cooper said. "He works to make everything happen."

One thing that defines Seay's character, Hulse said, is what he does before and after school.

"He drives the handicap school bus every morning and many afternoons," Hulse said. "He enjoys that a whole lot. (Seay) is always ready to lend a helping hand."

*Bulletin Staff Writer Joanne Bratton contributed to this report.*

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