



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Norfolk Leadership and Earth Science Teacher Is Virginia's 2008 Teacher of the Year**

Thomas R. "Tommy" Smigiel Jr., a leadership and earth science teacher at Norview High School in Norfolk, was named the 2008 Virginia Teacher of the Year at a celebratory dinner Friday evening in Richmond. He was selected from the eight Virginia 2008 Regional Teachers of the Year announced in September. He will be the commonwealth's nominee in the Council of Chief State School Officers' National Teacher of the Year program, which is sponsored by ING Foundation.

"Tommy connects with his students," said Superintendent of Public Instruction Billy K. Cannaday Jr. "His effectiveness as an educator is reflected in the achievement of his students in Earth Science and the leadership skills they've learned from his example and tutelage."

"It is an honor to represent the commonwealth – and Norview High School – in the National Teacher of the Year Program," said Smigiel. Several of his students were present when the selection was announced.

Smigiel, a graduate of Norview, has taught at the Norfolk high school for eight years. After raising pass rates in Earth Science by 30 points, he was selected two years ago to teach a leadership course emphasizing community service and character education.

"Right now, I am fulfilling one of my life goals," he said. "I wanted to be a teacher to 'pay-it-forward' for my own teachers believing in me. Coming back to teach at the high school from which I graduated, and being able to inspire my students to do great things is the best gift I can give."

In addition to being named Virginia Teacher of the Year, Smigiel received an engraved crystal apple, a \$5,000 cash award from the Apple Federal Credit Union Education Foundation, and a check for \$2,500 from Allen, Allen, Allen & Allen, a Richmond law firm that has supported the Virginia Teacher of the Year Program since 1992. SMARTerKids Foundation and Peripheral Vision LLC also provided technology packages to the eight regional winners.

Smigiel was selected after being interviewed earlier in the day by a committee that included representatives of professional and educational associations, the business community, and 2007 Virginia Teacher of the Year Susan W. Evans of Wythe County. Two previous Virginia teachers have gone on to become National Teacher of the Year: B. Philip Bigler, the 1998 Virginia Teacher of the Year, and Mary Bicouvaris, the 1989 Virginia Teacher of the Year.

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