



## **Laquey Wins \$10,000 Classroom Makeover**

By Darrell Todd Maurina  
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Some people look at the apples and oranges sitting on a table in Richard McCoy's life skills classroom in Laquey and only see tasty fruit.

McCoy sees an opportunity to teach counting skills to his special education students — and also sees the results of a \$10,000 classroom makeover paid for by the Honeywell Corporation after he was one of five winners of a national competition to teach safety rules to his students.

The Honeywell Corporation sponsors an annual contest in which the top five teacher essay winners receive a classroom makeover and the next 100 best teacher essays on student safety win \$500 each in classroom supplies.

The contest is intended to recognize the best ways to teach students four basic rules of safety: checking first with parents or guardians before accepting gifts, rides or invitations from anyone; always going with friends, never alone; refusing unwelcome, uncomfortable, or confusing touch or actions by others; and telling a trusted adult such as a parent or teacher if anyone or anything makes them feel scared, uncomfortable or confused.

That can be particularly difficult with special education students. McCoy's essay explained that he uses role playing, scenarios, and student-created posters and other art to help special education students understand rules needed to keep them safe from abuse.

McCoy's essay impressed Honeywell, and representatives of the company came Friday to the Laquey back-to-school open house to present a plaque recognizing McCoy's efforts.

McCoy used the Honeywell money to build a "life skills" classroom that he'll use to teach basic lessons to his students.

"Smart teachers always look for money wherever it's available," McCoy said. "The Missouri State Teachers Association web site had a link to Honeywell, I applied in January, and in mid-March I got my congratulatory letter saying I won."

Teaching enough math to special education students to enable them to survive in the working world is difficult, McCoy said, but the life skills classroom will help.

"One of the big things we struggle with is we want people to learn, but it is easier to teach fractions if you are showing students how to bake half a cake," McCoy said.

Dividing the ingredients of a recipe in half is a practical way to teach the concept of fractions to those special education students, McCoy said.

After more than a dozen years as an educator, McCoy said he's grateful to Honeywell for providing funds Laquey never could have afforded on its own.

McCoy said the life skills classroom is typically used by 15 to 20 students at a time.

"I think that everything about life skills needs to be hands-on," McCoy said. "If they touch, taste and experience it, they are much more likely to learn it."

According to a company press release, Honeywell partners with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) to bring safety resources to every community in the United States. Since 2003, Honeywell and NCMEC have worked together on Got 2B Safe!, an abduction prevention program for elementary school students, to teach children potentially life-saving lessons.