Second-grade teacher Pam Reilly of Woodbury Elementary in Sandwich Community Unit School District 430 is the 2014 Illinois Teacher of the Year. She was one of 11 finalists recognized during the 39th annual Those Who Excel/Illinois Teacher of the Year banquet on Oct. 19, 2013, in Normal.

Pam competed for National Teacher of the Year and represented Illinois at a variety of events, including a trip to NASA Space Camp in Huntsville, Ala., and speaking engagements at teaching workshops and educational conferences.

Now in her 13th year of teaching, Pam is recognized as a collaborator and a leader by her colleagues in the Sandwich district, home of six schools serving more than 2,300 students in northern Illinois. She seeks advice and guidance from teachers in the higher grades so that she can help her students be prepared for the challenges they will face after they leave her classroom.

Pam stresses that students are in control of their own learning and that although she may do the planning and preparation for the school day, it is the students who are doing the important work. She also understands the importance of addressing a child’s social, emotional as well as academic needs. She advocates for hungry students, those with absent parents or from financially stressed families, and students who need to be more challenged. Pam believes that all children, regardless of their circumstances, can thrive and learn.

A graduate of Aurora University with a Bachelor of Science in education, Pam also holds a Master of Education from National Louis University. She is a continuous participant in all types of professional development and is constantly researching and planning lessons that are engaging and relative.

More than 180 nominations for Those Who Excel were reviewed and scored three times by a selection committee composed of administrators, teachers and school board members. Principals, faculty, parents and students submit letters on behalf of candidates as part of the nomination process. The 11 finalists for Teacher of the Year were interviewed and videotaped, and those interviews were scored again before going to State Superintendent Koch for a final decision.

On Oct. 25, 2014, Pam joined educators from across the state at the 40th annual Those Who Excel/Illinois Teacher of the Year banquet as Steven Elza was named the 2015 Illinois Teacher of the Year. Steven is an automotive technology teacher at William Fremd High School in Township High School District 211.