

The 2007 Governor's

# HERITAGE AWARDS

**M**EMORIES TRIGGER FRESH energy for an innovative educator and an accomplished roots musician, the winners of this year's Governor's Heritage Awards.

Co-sponsored by the Vermont Folklife Center and *Vermont Life*, the awards are given each year — one to a teacher, one to an artist — with the aim of nourishing Vermont's traditional culture in a time of technological and social change.

By GREG SHARROW,  
VERMONT FOLKLIFE CENTER

Photographed by JON GILBERT FOX

## ARTIST

**Michèle Choinière**  
Celebrating a once-hidden sound

For generations, French Canadian immigrants were treated as outsiders in Vermont and their cultural traditions received little attention. Michèle Choinière grew up in Franklin County, part of this other world, where French was her first language and Franco-American roots music was heard daily. Her mother, Lucille, is a fine traditional singer, and her father, Fabio, plays his father's repertoire of fiddle tunes on harmonica. Even as a small child, Michèle accompanied her father on piano, and was exposed to Franco-American musical culture both at home and at family kitchen parties and soirees.

In recent years, Michèle has played with many acclaimed French Canadian artists who share her passion for traditional material. Her performances are a provocative blend of the music of older Vermont Franco-Americans and her own new compositions, written in French.

An extraordinary musician in her own right, Michèle has distinguished herself as the premier interpreter of Franco-American song traditions in Vermont.



Michèle Choinière

To hear a track from Michèle Choinière's CD "Coeur Fragile," see [www.VermontLife.com](http://www.VermontLife.com)



Teacher Phil Grant (center) with students (left to right) Annelise Klouster, Amelia Keefe and Megan Harris.

## TEACHER

**Phil Grant**

Capturing the spirit of summer camp

When Phil Grant was a boy he found himself wondering why school couldn't be more like summer camp. At camp he absorbed knowledge about science, ecology and the natural world, all while having fun outdoors. In a sense, this youthful quandary set the course for Grant's work as an educator.

As a humanities teacher at the Compass School in Westminster (he's now principal at Peoples Academy in Morrisville), Grant helped students explore the network of relationships that bind people to the natural

world. His "Changing Faces of Farming" unit had students examine their evening meals, then spread out to area farms to explore the origin of their food. Interviewing local farmers, they learned about the history of each farmstead and the changes that occurred during the 20th century. In the process, students began to understand how they fit within a complex global system.

This is heritage education, not as a relic of the past, but as a tool for deepening young people's knowledge of the modern world in which they live. ✦