

ATHENS, Ohio (June 2, 2011) - A Patton College alumna of 2009 has made great strides in education since her time at Ohio University.

Mary Abigail (Abbie) Moldovan graduated with a B.S. Ed. in Special Education degree and licensure as an Intervention Specialist. In August 2010, Moldovan began teaching in Florida at Flora Ridge Elementary School. She is the Intermediate Autism Spectrum Disorders Self-Contained Classroom Teacher with students who have moderate to intensive behavioral and educational needs in third to fifth grade levels.

"The (Patton) College requirements of several hundred hours in the classrooms before student teaching makes you feel ready for challenges," Moldovan said. "Everyone I interviewed with [in Florida] was extremely impressed by the experience I already had as a college graduate. The courses are tough, but they prepare you for anything, and in a SPED (Special Education) world, that is very important."

During her student teaching in Ohio, Moldovan entered a national Kraft Foods competition for an all-expense-paid classroom field trip to the destination of the teacher's choice. In September 2010, Moldovan's entry was selected as a national finalist. After disclosing that her student teaching had ended and that she was teaching full-time in the School District of Osceola County, Florida, Kraft Foods chose to award the prize to Moldovan's Flora Ridge classroom, citing her outstanding entry essay as the basis for the decision. Students and parents from Moldovan's classroom enjoyed an all-expense-paid trip to Sea World's Manatee Exhibit.

"The students at my school usually don't get the advantage of going to special trips like this, especially with their parents," Moldovan said. "We saw lots of shows, learned about animals and had a blast. It will be something I will never forget."

Moldovan was also recognized for her first year teaching at Flora Ridge Elementary. Her peers selected her as the building's 2010-2011 First-Year Teacher of the Year, and the administrators at Flora Ridge honored Moldovan as the building's Special Education Teacher of the Year. She is one of five special education teachers and one of ten first-year teachers at the building.

"I was very humbled and truly excited about these awards," Moldovan said. "I have a challenging job that I spend a lot of time preparing for, and it gave me a sense of pride to know I was doing good things. It's just the Bobcat in me!"

The North Canton, Ohio, native continues to work at the school in Florida, because she enjoys helping students. She said that while she doesn't have all the answers, she does have the desire to help and especially to learn from her students.

Story by Nicole Bersani; Photos provided by Moldovan.