



Update from the Superintendent

To: Parents and Guardians
From: Bill Husfelt, Superintendent
Date: January 21, 2022

By the time you read this, we will have made the final announcements of our Teacher of a Lifetime, our Rookie Teacher of the Year, our Ann F. Smith Support Employee of the Year and our Teacher of the Year. I hope you followed our “surprise patrol” announcements on social media and/or saw the media coverage of these exciting events.

While circumstances beyond our control made it unwise to hold our annual Excellence in Education ceremony this year, we have worked hard to make this moment as special as possible for the employees we’re honoring and for all of our deserving nominees who work so very hard each day for our children.

So, I’d like to use my column this week to highlight our winners just a little bit so you can get to know them.

Teacher of a Lifetime

The graphic is a vertical rectangle with a teal and white geometric background. On the left side is a photograph of Cynthia McCauley, a woman with short reddish-brown hair, smiling and holding a small brown dog. On the right side, the text reads: "2021-2022 Teacher of a Lifetime Cynthia McCauley Chautauqua Charter School". At the top right is the Bay District Schools Florida logo. At the bottom are three logos: STJOE Community Foundation, Bay Education Foundation, and PCU.


2021-2022
Teacher of a Lifetime
Cynthia McCauley
Chautauqua Charter School

  

This award was borne out of conversations several years ago between myself and community leaders who wanted to honor amazing teachers in our community who have given so much.

This award is designed to highlight those people, closer to the end of their careers or into retirement, to thank them for all that they have done for our community. By sponsoring this award, generous community leaders ensure our teacher winners receive additional prize money and those leaders are then able to choose educators who have truly impacted them and the lives of others in Bay County. Previous sponsors include the Bay Education Foundation, The Allan Bense Family, the Chapman Family, The Patronis Family and Panama City Mazda. This year, our BDS Teacher of a Lifetime Award is sponsored by the honorable Jay Trumbull and his family. Their honoree is Cynthia McCauley, the founding director of Chautauqua Charter School. Cynthia has devoted her life to meeting the needs of students with differing abilities and she started Chautauqua after realizing those students did not have many options after graduation from high school. Under her direction, Cynthia's adult students travel the world as advocates for others with special needs and volunteer countless hours right here in their own community. Thanks to Cynthia's behind-the-scenes advocacy, her students lead independent lives their parents never envisioned and give back to others with a passion and determination we should all emulate.

Rookie Teacher of the Year



Our Rookie Teacher of the Year is a brand-new award that resulted from conversations with both the Bay Education Foundation and the Association of Bay County Educators (ABCE) which is the teacher's union group. Teaching is an art, a calling and a craft that takes many years to honor and we wanted a way to recognize those who are new to our profession ... our up and coming superstars. So, the Bay Education Foundation generously offered to sponsor this award going forward and we're SO excited to recognize Emily Partington from Bay High School.

Emily, who teaches Spanish, speaks five languages (Spanish, English, Russian, Arabic and Hebrew) and loves introducing her students to new languages and cultures. Her “bucket list” includes trips to visit all of the wonders of the world but in the meantime she’s content to introduce her students to the world virtually.

In addition to being an amazing Rookie Teacher, Emily is the assistant coach for the Bay High School softball team, the assistant basketball coach and the Pep Club Sponsor.

Ann F. Smith Support Employee of the Year



This award was named in honor of Ann Smith, our beloved certification officer who retired several years ago. Ann was an amazing resource for new instructional and support employees and her service to this district was incredibly impactful. This year’s winner of the Ann F. Smith Support Employee of the Year Award is no less impactful.

It’s our honor to recognize Greg Lyon as this year’s award winner. Greg is a paraprofessional at Hiland Park Elementary School and is a retired Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer with 20 years active duty military service.

As an active member of a Native American Tribe, Greg visits schools to share traditional performances during the fall. He hopes to hike the Appalachian Trail this summer. While an active member of his school’s staff, Greg’s commitment to his students knows no bounds. Last year, he and his wife actually fostered a young Hiland Park student who was removed from her home. He took her in, he said, because the school is her family and he didn’t want her to have to move to a different community.

BDS Teacher of the Year



Bay District Schools has a long history of excellence in education (hence the name of our annual recognition ceremonies) and, as Superintendent, I've had the honor of recognizing some incredible teachers as our BDS Teachers of the Year. This year's winner is another exemplary educator and we're proud to recognize Gaile Cassady from Tommy Smith Elementary School. Gale, who teaches first grade at Tommy Smith Elementary School, has more than 22 years of experience. She has spent her entire career, with the exception of two years of looping with her students, in first grade and can't imagine spending her days anywhere else. During her observation with the selection committee, Gale impressed every member with her ability to keep her young students actively engaged and learning on task.

No doubt, ALL of our more than 3,000 employees deserve to be celebrated and honored every single day. Their continued devotion, despite the challenges we've faced in the past three years, is commendable and I appreciate all of them. I hope that you'll take some time this week to congratulate our winners and to thank all of our employees for their continued service.

Stay safe and God Bless!