

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Village of Gurnee Honors 2020 Teachers of the Year Recipients

GURNEE, IL – The Village of Gurnee is excited to announce the 2020 Gurnee Teacher of the Year recipients. The 2020 winners of the annual award are Mrs. Kathy Shinnars (Woodland District 50), Mrs. Stephanie Parker (Gurnee District 56) and Ms. Laura Offeling (Warren Township High School District 121).

These annual awards were created through the collaboration of the Village, school districts and local business owner Donald Henderson under the leadership of Vice Mayor Tom Hood. The awards recognize the distinguished accomplishments of a peer-nominated recipient from each district in service to their students, schools and school district.

Mrs. Shinnars started at Woodland in 1987 as a Woodland Junior High teacher. She has been a teacher in the Woodland district for over 30 years, where she has taught regular and advanced language arts for 6th, 7th and 8th grade. In 2016, Mrs. Shinnars moved to Woodland Intermediate to teach advanced Math and Language arts to 5th grade students. In each of her roles at Woodland, Mrs. Shinnars has stayed in contact with her former students to see where their paths take them. Mrs. Shinnars will enjoy her last year teaching 5th grade Advanced Language Arts and math before retiring in June of 2021.

Woodland District 50 Acting Superintendent Dr. Lori Casey said, “Mrs. Shinnars recognizes that every child has unique stories and gifts to share, and she uses that to bring out the best in them. Her ability to connect with students and their families is one of the things that makes her such a great teacher.”

Mrs. Parker is a 6th grade Language Arts Teacher at Viking School. Gurnee District 56 Superintendent Dr. Colleen Pacatte said, “I believe [Mrs. Parker] stands out because of her true love of teaching. She recognizes what her students need and she puts so much thought into helping them find it. [Her] student engagement is always incredibly high no matter what the lesson is like in the classroom. She is an excellent role model for our students and our staff.”

Ms. Oeffling has served in education for 30 years, including teaching at Warren Township High School for the last 23 years. Oeffling believes math is its own language of sorts, and once students are taught how to speak it, a whole new world can open up for them. “I understand that some kids will use math in their future careers and others will not. But whatever their future holds, I hope that one thing they all take away

from their time in my math class is the knowledge of what it feels like to be really challenged and the confidence to persevere, work through it and overcome” said Ms. Oeffling.

District 121 Superintendent Dr. Ahlgrim said, “[Ms. Oeffling] is the role model for student-centered teaching. The time and commitment she dedicates in and out of the classroom to help her students reach their potential on an individual basis is second to none. We are so proud to help recognize her as our Gurnee Teacher of the Year.”

Regarding the awards, Trustee Tom Hood said, “The Village is proud of each school district in town and desires to support our schools in real and meaningful ways. Providing a forum in which each District can put forward a teacher that embodies their efforts in providing a quality education to the young people in our Village is just one way in which we can support our school districts’ efforts.”

Mayor Kristina Kovarik, Vice Mayor Tom Hood and the Henderson Foundation will present the awards via mail to the winners due to COVID-19. In addition to the plaque recognizing their achievement, each teacher will receive a monetary contribution from the Henderson Foundation.

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