

News Release

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Evers to recognize six Friend of Education recipients

MADISON — Three individuals and three organizations will receive the 2016 Friend of Education Award at a Capitol ceremony on Sept. 15 in recognition of their commitment to children and public education.

“Their passion for public education and the children attending Wisconsin’s public schools is truly inspiring,” said State Superintendent Tony Evers. “Their stories of service and accomplishment show what it means to be a Friend of Education.”

Evers will present his Friend of Education awards to former State Senators Timothy Cullen of Janesville and Dale Schultz of Richland Center for their work in the Wisconsin Legislature and their private lives in support of public education; Eau Claire Area Hmong Mutual Assistance Association for its work to prepare youth and adults with the skills needed to succeed in life; Journey House for its commitment to Southside Milwaukee families through adult education, workforce readiness, youth development, and family engagement programs; Ronald Morris, an admissions adviser with the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, for his commitment to partnerships that extend higher education to Wisconsin families; and Simpson Street Free Press of Madison, for teaching students literacy skills that support their school achievement. Additional information about each recipient follows.

Sen. Timothy F. Cullen was born and raised in Janesville and has served his local community as a state senator and school board member. He led the effort to implement 4-year-old kindergarten and add Chinese as a world language during his time on the Janesville School Board. In the Legislature, Cullen fought to increase funding for public schools. He started a scholarship fund for Janesville students of color who dream of being a teacher and is responsible for bringing the ideas from the Simpson Street Free Press, another Friend of Education, to Janesville. The Janesville Free Press helps students develop their literacy skills. Through a foundation started with his wife, Cullen financially supports a summer Legislative internship experience for four Janesville students.

With a belief that bipartisan collaboration is the best way to accomplish change that is long lasting, **Sen. Dale W. Schultz** has had a long and distinguished legislative career in which he passionately advocated for the needs of Wisconsin’s students. He was a strong supporter of budget initiatives focused on Wisconsin’s rural schools. Although retired from the Wisconsin State Senate, Schultz continues to remain engaged in promoting reforms for public schools. He has sponsored over 25 community forums around the state to discuss the issues facing schools in an era of dramatic demographic changes and declining state support for Wisconsin’s public schools. He is noted for his strong belief that there is no problem too large to fix as long as everyone works together.

(more)

The **Eau Claire Area Hmong Mutual Assistance Association** was established in 1982 to help Hmong families and individuals overcome cultural shock, language barriers, lack of education, and lack of job skills. These challenges are still relevant today for both recently arrived refugees and established residents. Since the association started, the Hmong population has grown to over 3,000 in the city of Eau Claire making it the largest minority group in the area. The association is committed to empowering Chippewa Valley Hmong-Americans to become socially and economically self-sufficient and has provided Hmong-Americans with access to housing, health care, and career and educational opportunities. Receiving the award on behalf of the association will be Executive Director Pa Thao.

Started in 1969, **Journey House** empowers families living on Milwaukee's near Southside to move out of poverty by offering adult education, workforce readiness, youth development, and family engagement programs. Journey House has been committed to working with low-income youth and adults to prepare them with the skills needed to make their dreams come true. Education, relationship building, and exposure are three core elements of Journey House programs. Those elements are prominent in two agencywide programs. Yes! (Youth Empowerment Seminar) and the Community Building Initiative help to build top talent through education and character development, reduce unemployment and crime, strengthen families, and revitalize neighborhoods. Accepting the 2016 Friend of Education award for Journey House will be Dr. Michele Bria, Journey House's executive director.

Ronald Morris, an admissions adviser for UW-Green Bay, is receiving a Friend of Education award for work that extends beyond his 9 to 5 job. Morris understands the importance of education and has been a great partner for the Department of Public Instruction's various college prep programs. During workshops and conversations with students, Morris shares his personal testimony of what his life was prior to the transformational experience of higher education. He worked collaboratively with the DPI to develop the Phoenix Scholars Program, a week-long summer college readiness initiative focused on African-American middle school males. The first two cohorts of Phoenix Scholars graduated from high school last year. He counts himself fortunate to have had three impactful mentors as an undergraduate and wants the same for the students with whom he has the privilege to work.

The **Simpson Street Free Press** was founded in 1992 and has kept the same focus throughout the years: the children of the Madison area. Simpson Street Free Press programs are designed to foster literacy, spark achievement, and support the school day. Students are engaged by working in an authentic newsroom atmosphere and by practicing skills that will better prepare them for life. In the past 24 years, Simpson Street Free Press has expanded its outreach with a number of newsrooms in the Madison area publishing six newspapers, with a circulation of over 20,000. Editors work directly with more than 200 students a year, teaching the student writers a multi-step writing process. An important concept students learn quickly is to "never hand in your first draft." Simpson Street's program motivates students especially when they see their hard work pay off by having an article published. Accepting the Friend of Education Award for the Simpson Street Free Press will be Taylor Kilgore and McKenna Kohlenberg.

Presentation of the 2016 Friend of Education awards will be part of the State of Education Address and Recognition Ceremony on Thursday, Sept. 15. The event begins at noon in the Capitol Rotunda in Madison.

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NOTE: This news release is available electronically at http://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/news-release/dpinr2016_82.pdf.