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DPI-NR 2015-79 C

Friday, September 4, 2015

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Eau Claire educator named Wisconsin Middle School Teacher of the Year

Suzanne Devine to receive \$3,000 from Herb Kohl Educational Foundation

MADISON — In a surprise ceremony at her school, Suzanne Devine, a seventh- and eighth-grade science and social studies teacher at Northstar Middle School in Eau Claire, was named Wisconsin’s Middle School Teacher of the Year for the 2015-16 school year.

State Superintendent Tony Evers made the announcement during an all-school assembly. As part of the Teacher of the Year honor, Devine will receive \$3,000 from the Herb Kohl Educational Foundation.

“A Teacher of the Year demonstrates an unwavering commitment to students,” Evers said. “It’s my honor to recognize Suzanne for the work she does and for being such an exceptional representative of educators in Wisconsin’s public schools.”

“Highlighting excellent work and leadership in our schools and bringing these individuals forward for recognition reminds educators of the important work they do and the reason they chose this career,” said Herb Kohl, philanthropist, businessman, and former U.S. Senator, who co-sponsors the program through his educational foundation. “Educators contribute to our communities in so many ways. Also, we want to encourage talented students to enter the field of education in Wisconsin.”

Devine is described as someone who “exudes a love of learning the instant you meet her” and someone whose “passion for teaching naturally bubbles out of her and overflows with deep care and desire for students to grow personally.” Her commitment to her students extends far beyond just what they learn in the classroom. She takes a personal interest in the lives of every student she teaches. She seeks to meet the needs of those students facing challenging times outside of school in every way she can. “Anyone can teach a classroom full of gifted students, but I have a special place in my heart for those whose personal struggles interfere with learning,” she said.

Preparing children for success in all areas of life and instilling a love for learning is the core of Devine’s educational philosophy. “I feel that by building great character, each child is able to become more successful ...,” she says. She draws upon the district’s values of respect, responsibility, courage, compassion, honesty, and justice as expectations for her students to meet at all times. She says she is “blessed to be able to teach a combination of

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science lessons and life lessons that will enable my students — my children — to be the new leaders in their communities.”

Devine is committed to constantly learning new teaching models and labs to enhance student learning. She is involved with the National Science Teachers Association and updates her lesson plans and curriculum as she finds new and innovative ideas. She has taken more than 100 students to Women in Science, an event encouraging female students to pursue careers in the science field.

She also is involved in many charitable and service organizations in her community and strives to include students in these projects whenever possible. A few of these community service activities include working to make all of the Northstar neighborhood sidewalks accessible, picking up trash in the neighborhood, organizing student bell ringers for the Salvation Army, volunteering at a local food pantry, and visiting nursing home residents.

Devine attended the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire where she earned a bachelor of science degree. She began her teaching career at St. Joseph’s Elementary School in Menomonie. She also taught at Colfax Elementary School and Cadott Middle School before starting with Northstar Middle School in 2004. Evers will recognize Devine as the Wisconsin Middle School Teacher of the Year during his State of Education address Sept. 17 in Madison.

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