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Contact: Tom McCarthy, DPI Communications Director, (608) 266-3559

Kim Marggraf, Herb Kohl Educational Foundation Inc., (920) 457-1727 (office) (920) 946-3640 (cell)

Five educators named Wisconsin Teachers of the Year

Herb Kohl Educational Foundation gives \$3,000 to each honoree

MADISON – “These educators know that our kids are more than academics. They teach to the whole child,” said State Superintendent Tony Evers in congratulating Wisconsin’s 2018-19 Teachers of the Year.

This year, five educators have been chosen to represent Wisconsin’s teaching corps as Teachers of the Year. Each will receive \$3,000 from the Herb Kohl Educational Foundation. The five educators are: **Liz Gulden**, a kindergarten teacher at Willson Elementary School in Baraboo, Elementary School Teacher of the Year; **Maggie McHugh** of Sparta, a sixth-grade teacher and adviser at the La Crosse Design Institute, Middle School Teacher of the Year; **Sarahi Monterrey**, an English Learner teacher at Waukesha North High School, and **Benjamin Grignon**, teacher of traditional Menominee crafts at Menominee Indian High School in Keshena, who share the High School Teacher of the Year title; and **Michael Wilson**, a school counselor at St. Croix Falls High School, Special Services Teacher of the Year. Evers notified each of the teachers of the honor during surprise announcements in their school districts.

Selection of the five Teachers of the Year is through a statewide committee made up of educators, parents, and community leaders. The panel reviews applications from the 86 public school recipients of the Kohl Teacher Fellowship who were named earlier this spring. Teacher Fellowship recipients are nominated and selected based on their ability to inspire a love of learning in their students, ability to motivate others, and their leadership and service within and outside the classroom.

“These five educators are so impressive,” Evers said. “They represent the many fine individuals who work in our public school classrooms and give so much outside of school to help our children learn the skills and knowledge the need to graduate ready for college, careers, and life.”

“Our teachers work so hard to inspire young people and help them become the leaders of tomorrow. I am honored to support the Teacher of the Year program to recognize our teachers’ efforts and support their unrealized goals for their classroom, their school, or their professional development,” said

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Herb Kohl, philanthropist and businessman who co-sponsors the Wisconsin Teacher of the Year program through his foundation.

Elementary School Teacher of the Year

[Elizabeth \(Liz\) Gulden](#), a kindergarten teacher at Willson Elementary School in Baraboo, motivates and inspires her students' love of learning by practicing and learning along with them. She spearheaded a districtwide initiative to accelerate the number of sight words kindergarteners master before the end of the school year. Sensitive to the importance of inclusiveness, she sends home books and math and writing activities in English and Spanish so dual-language families can support learning at home. She restructured Math Night to incorporate games from around the world and championed the Playground Fundraising Committee, raising money to replace and upgrade playground equipment that benefits the school and community. Gulden earned her National Board Certification in 2017. She holds a bachelor's degree in early childhood and a master's degree in professional development, both from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. She earlier earned an associate's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Baraboo/Sauk County.

Middle School Teacher of the Year

A sixth-grade teacher and adviser for the La Crosse Design Institute, a project-based learning charter school in the La Crosse School District, [Maggie McHugh](#) says she teaches students how to learn, not what to learn. She provides multiple access points for students to learn material and show what they've learned through innovative projects, including "Playgrounds for All" and "Walls." Her students present with her at Wisconsin Mathematics Council (WMC) conferences and go into pre-service classrooms to teach future teachers how to integrate technology into learning experiences. She invites families to support their students' learning through several events. She spearheaded the WMC biweekly Twitter chats that provide professional learning opportunities to her colleagues across the state and nation. McHugh earned a doctorate in curriculum and instruction with an emphasis on social justice mathematics from New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, N.M. She holds bachelor and master's degrees from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

High School Teachers of the Year

She always knew she wanted to be a teacher, says [Sarahí Monterrey](#), an English Learner teacher at Waukesha North High School. A child immigrant from El Salvador, she recognizes the pivotal role teachers play in students' lives. "Dreamers Welcome" and "This School Welcomes You" posters adorn the school, and her professional development sessions on the impact of immigration policies increases awareness among her colleagues. Monterrey brought the co-teaching model to Waukesha North with the school offering English 9, algebra I and II, geometry, Spanish IV, and chemistry taught by content and specialty teachers to support student academic success. She works to ensure an inclusive curriculum and improved family communication and reaches out to ensure that English learner students have access to extracurricular activities and support to be ready for college. The Girl Talk club she created helps participants be decision makers, hone problem-solving skills, and volunteer in the community. She holds bachelor and master's degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater.

As a teacher of traditional arts at Menominee Indian High School in Keshena, [Benjamin Grignon](#) works with students on the art forms of the Menominee people and the language and cultural practices that go along with these arts. Additionally, he uses Menominee culture to reinforce other subjects in the school. His

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students learn menaceaew (respect) for themselves, each other, and for the knowledge passed on from the elders. Classroom meditation helps students center themselves, and Grignon offers lesson alternatives to create a safe place for students in support of programming to address Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), which are prevalent in the high-poverty district. Grignon leads traditional activities for the Mawaw Ceseniyah Center for Language, Culture, and the Arts and teaches community art workshops at East-West University and the College of Menominee Nation. He earned associate, bachelor, and master's degrees in fine arts from the Institute of American Indian Art in Santa Fe, N. M., the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and the University of Arizona in Tucson. Grignon earned his teaching certification through Concordia University's Appleton campus.

Special Services Teacher of the Year

Michael Wilson, a school counselor at St. Croix Falls High School, is a self-described champion for mental health awareness and reducing stigma around the topic. He pioneered a Bandana Project for students to show support for mental health issues and assisted area counselors in securing office space in the school so students can receive counseling services confidentially, without leaving school. Wilson streamlined some components of the BARR (Building Assets Reducing Risks) program to provide real-time, shared data that improved efficiency and effectiveness and brought mental health screening to first-year high school students to ensure their needs can be met on multiple levels. Outside of school, Wilson has coached or been assistant coach for 20 plus baseball teams, leads the St. Croix Falls Baseball Association, and helped raise thousands of dollars to improve baseball facilities for community youth. He holds a bachelor's degree in psychology and master's degree in guidance and counseling from the University of Wisconsin-Stout and a Master of Science in Education from UW-River Falls.

Each of the Teachers of the Year will be honored during the Sept. 20 State of Education address and awards program at the State Capitol in Madison. They will interview with a committee that will select one of the five Teachers of the Year to represent Wisconsin in the National Teacher of the Year program. That individual will receive an additional \$6,000 from the Herb Kohl Educational Foundation.

Nominations for the Kohl Teacher Fellowship program can be made online on the [Herb Kohl Educational Foundation website](http://www.kohleducation.org/teacherfellowship/) <http://www.kohleducation.org/teacherfellowship/>.

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NOTES: Further background on each Teacher of the Year can be found on the Department of Public Instruction newsroom website, <https://dpi.wi.gov/news/releases>. This news release is available electronically at <https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/news-release/dpinr2018-50.pdf>.