

# PRESS RELEASE

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Date:** Wednesday, April 25, 2018  
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## Village of Gurnee Honors 2018 Teachers of the Year Recipients

GURNEE, IL – The annual Teacher of the Year Award Ceremony for teachers in Districts 50, 56 and 121 will be held on Monday, May 7<sup>th</sup> at Gurnee Village Hall (325 N. O'Plaine Road) as part of the Village Board's regular meeting beginning at 7:00 p.m. Mayor Kristina Kovarik and the Village Board, in conjunction with Superintendents Dr. Joy Swoboda of Woodland District 50, Dr. John Hutton of Gurnee School District 56 and Dr. John Ahlgrim of Warren Township High School District 121, will recognize the 2018 Teachers of the Year from each of the respective Gurnee-area school districts.

These annual awards were created through the collaboration of the Village, school districts and local business owner Donald Henderson under the leadership of Village Trustee 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. The 2018 winners are Mrs. Traci Strieter (District 50), Mrs. Brandi Zivilik (District 56) and Mr. Mark Leech (District 121).

Mrs. Strieter started her teaching career six years ago at Woodland. Prior to her current teaching assignment, she taught third grade and supported special education students in a general classroom setting. A U.S. Navy veteran, Mrs. Strieter is highly respected by students, staff, and community members as someone with a strong work ethic and a positive attitude who always is among the first to volunteer. In the classroom, she is always on her feet, enthusiastically moving from station to station finding ways to engage her students by teaching to their specific strengths and lifting them up to be successful.

Woodland Superintendent Dr. Swoboda said, "Traci is a teacher who inspires learning in students of all abilities and the gift of inspiration she brings to the classroom helps students consistently go beyond expectations. We are so proud she is part of the Woodland family."

Mrs. Zivilik is a sixth grade social studies teacher at Viking School and is involved with Team Lead, Response to Intervention (RtI), and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) initiatives at the school. Some of the activities that she has sponsored while supporting student learning are Team Lead Coordinator for eight years, mix it up lunch days, Feed my Starving Children, WE DAY, school committees, student mentoring, problem-based learning, and self-paced classrooms. Mrs. Zivilik is also taking graduate level classes to acquire a Type 75 Administrator's License.

District 56 Superintendent Dr. Hutton said, "The success of this School District is directly related to the quality of teaching and learning that occurs in our classrooms. Mrs. Zivilik is an outstanding teacher but would be the first to recognize that we have a number of great teachers at Gurnee District 56. I have the wonderful opportunity to observe the great work of our staff on a daily basis and would have to say that the norm in this District is that we have outstanding teachers in most classrooms. Mrs. Zivilik is certainly one of those high performing teachers in our School District and I believe she would say that she is accepting the award on behalf of all the outstanding teachers at Gurnee District 56. Congratulations to Mrs. Zivilik on receiving a very deserving award."

Mr. Leech has been teaching at Warren for 17 years in the academic resource program. He earned his associate's degree from the College of Lake County in 1992, a bachelor's degree from Drake University in 1996 and a master's degree from Marian University in Wisconsin in 2008. Mr. Leech is proud to accept this award and also wants to recognize his mentors, Marilyn Strahan and Mary Hanson; his friends and family; and all of the colleagues, past and present, who have supported him as a teacher over the years.

District 121 Superintendent Dr. Ahlgrim said, "Mark's commitment to making a difference in the lives of individual students is exceptional. He has certainly enriched the future for many of our students through his years at Warren."

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."

The awards will be presented by Mayor Kovarik, Trustee Tom Hood, the Henderson Foundation, and representatives from each school district. In addition to the plaque recognizing their achievement, each teacher will receive a check for \$1,000.00 from the Henderson Foundation.

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