

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Village of Gurnee Honors 2023 Teachers of the Year Recipients

GURNEE, IL – The Village of Gurnee is proud to announce the 2023 Gurnee Teacher of the Year Awards. The recipients are Anthony Nelson (Warren Township High School District 121), Gloria Tinucci-Frank (Woodland District 50), and Randy Luce (Gurnee District 56).

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

Mr. Anthony Nelson of Warren Township High School was awarded as one of Gurnee's Teachers of the Year. He has served in education for 30 years and teaching at Warren Township High School for the past 26 years, specifically teaching chemistry and physics. In addition to teaching science classes, Mr. Nelson is an advisor for the Chess Club and the Astronomy Club. Over the years, the Astronomy Club has served well over 1,000 students, including many of whom have gone on to work for organizations such as SpaceX and NASA, as well as leading some students to eventual careers and doctorate degrees in Astronomy.

Mr. Nelson believes that all people can learn science and the benefits that go along with that knowledge. "As Carl Sagan once said, 'we are all star-stuff,' says Nelson." Dr. Danny Woestman, Warren Township High School District 121 Superintendent said, "We are extremely proud of Tony and appreciate many years of service that he has provided for our students. We are proud to help recognize Tony as our Gurnee Teacher of the Year."

Mr. Anthony Nelson, a native of Sweet Home, Arkansas, holds a bachelor's degree and a master's degree from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, a master's degree in Educational Leadership from Northeastern Illinois University, and a master's degree in Science Education from the Illinois Institute of Technology. He has also served as the President of the Illinois Association of Chemistry Teachers in 2010, attending national conferences representing Warren Township High School.

Mrs. Gloria Tinucci-Frank of Woodland Middle School was also awarded as one of Gurnee's Teachers of the Year. She has served in education for 21 years teaching 6th and 7th Grade social studies. Mrs. Tinucci-Frank was nominated for the Gurnee Teacher of the Year award by several Woodland Middle School students. Her students appreciate how welcoming she is to everyone, and always greets students with a friendly smile and a good morning greeting to start the day. They describe her classroom as a safe and welcoming environment, where she fosters a sense of community in the classroom by allowing students to work together.

Mrs. Tinucci-Frank explained, "It is truly an honor and a surprise to be nominated by my students as Woodland's Teacher of the Year! I love teaching 6th grade because my students are friendly and

enthusiastic, which always brings a smile to my face. Their happiness and energy levels are contagious. I am also passionate about sharing my love of history. This is a period of time when elementary students begin their journey into middle school, and begin to learn how to become independent thinkers. I work hard to make sure that students stay engaged and ultimately feel successful. I am truly lucky to be able to teach these kids and hopefully spark a love of learning that they can carry forward throughout their lives.”

Woodland Middle School Principal Tiffany Drake said, “She is the kind of teacher that makes learning fun with creative assignments and hands-on activities. Gloria is always willing to help her students overcome challenges, she gives students a chance to correct and improve their work, and she encourages her students to keep trying and never give up. These are skills that our students will be able to use for the rest of their lives.”

Dr. Robert Machak, Woodland District 50 Superintendent stated, “Gloria’s enthusiasm for teaching and learning is infectious; she is such a humble, positive person. It was so cool to see how excited her students were for her. They really love her. Gloria’s dedication to our Woodland students and to her own growth as an educator are emblematic of the outstanding teaching staff we have here at Woodland. I’m honored to be able to work with someone like her each day.”

Mrs. Tinucci-Frank holds a bachelor’s degree in Elementary Education from Trinity International University and a master’s degree in Teacher Leadership from St. Xavier University.

Finally, Mr. Randy Luce of Gurnee School District 56 was awarded as one of Gurnee’s Teachers of the Year. Mr. Luce has worked in the Gurnee School District 56 for 24 successful years as a School Psychologist. In his role as School Psychologist, Randy has supported students, families and staff throughout the district’s schools.

Superintendent Colleen Pacatte stated, “You could not find a more humble servant than Randy. He is fully committed to his job and our district. He is always the man behind the curtain making certain everyone else has what they need to be successful.”

Randy’s greatest strength is to work with children, helping them to demonstrate their knowledge and skills by creating a calm and welcoming setting that allows them to be themselves. While completing assessments, he recognizes when students need a break, to take a walk or if they simply need to try again on another day. He understands the importance of making sure that classroom teachers have all the data they need to make informed instructional decisions about their students. In addition, his calm manner and ability to communicate complicated information to parents has helped parents feel comfortable and empowered as a part of the educational team and process. He has been a mentor and model for new school psychologists as they have learned not just how to write reports and paperwork but how work with children, parents and teachers in a way that everyone is working together as part of a cohesive team.

Superintendent Colleen Pacatte also said, “Our staff and our families trust the work of Mr. Luce and feel confident that he has the best interest of the students at heart. Randy doesn’t need to be the one out front, but the pride he has in his work shines through. In fact, he will probably be terribly embarrassed to win this award of which he is so deserving.”

Regarding the awards, Mayor Tom Hood said, “It is a recognition that the Village does every year and this is the 9th year of doing so. I have enjoyed it myself and the schools have gone above and beyond as far as taking advantage of the opportunity to call out teachers that have served very well and make an example of them for the rest of the teachers.”

Mayor Tom Hood, David Henderson of the Henderson Foundation, and each school district’s corresponding representatives presented awards to the winners on Monday, May 8th. In addition to the plaque recognizing their achievement, teachers received a \$1,000 monetary contribution from the Henderson Foundation.

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