

# PRESS RELEASE

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Date:** Tuesday, May 7, 2024  
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## Village of Gurnee Honors 2024 Teacher of the Year Recipients

GURNEE, IL – The Village of Gurnee is proud to announce the 2024 Gurnee Teacher of the Year Award Recipients: John Bird (Warren Township High School District 121), Carrie Monterroso (Woodland District 50), and Stephanie Esteban (Gurnee District 56).

These prestigious awards are a testament to the collaborative efforts of the Village, local school districts, and business owner Donald Henderson, under the leadership of Mayor Tom Hood. These awards recognize the outstanding achievements of peer-nominated recipients from each district for their exceptional service to students, schools, and the community.

Mr. John Bird of Warren Township High School District 121 was awarded as one of Gurnee's Teachers of the Year. John has worked in education and social services for over 30 years. He began his career at the Dislocated Workers Center at Illinois Valley Community College, where he worked as the Employer Relations Representative. After moving to Lake County in 1994, he was employed by the College of Lake County through the National Workplace Literacy Project before joining Warren's staff.

In 2002, John was hired to teach English at Warren Township High School's Almond Campus and since that time he has taught numerous courses within the English Department including Advanced Placement Language and Composition and Honors American Studies. He is also an active union member serving on the WTHS Federation of Teachers Executive Board for 17 years including 14 years as Parliamentarian.

"John is a highly respected member of our teaching force here at Warren," said Dr. Danny Woestman, Superintendent of Schools for Warren Township High School District 121. "He is known by staff and students for being student-centered and dedicated to the families in our community. We are proud to recognize him through this award and grateful for his work."

Mr. Bird stated, "It has been a pleasure and an honor to work with such a talented and diverse group of students and staff at Warren over the past 22 years. It is truly an honor to earn this award. I am humbled and deeply appreciative."

Ms. Carrie Monterroso of Woodland District 50 was also awarded as one of Gurnee's Teachers of the Year. Carrie is a Kindergarten teacher in the Dual Language Program at Primary and has been part of the Woodland learning community since 2012.

Carrie was selected as Woodland's Teacher of the Year for her many strengths in supporting students and families and for her work beyond the classroom to keep the district moving forward. She is a caring and compassionate teacher for her students and an excellent resource for her colleagues in the Dual Language Program. She is a leader in her school and in the district through her role as an Equity Leader and a powerful advocate for all students. She is passionate about educating staff on diversity and inclusion issues and is

always working to improve the climate and culture of the school district.

Finally, Ms. Stephanie Esteban of Gurnee School District 56 was awarded as one of Gurnee's Teachers of the Year. Stephanie began her teaching career working for Viking School in 2009 and currently serves as an 8th Grade Social Studies Teacher. Stephanie has been an active member in the district's community through her involvement in committee work and extracurricular activities. She has provided leadership within the various teams, the MTSS Committee, and the SIOP training team to support building goals and progress. Stephanie has contributed to the implementation of school district's strategic plan and the Portrait of a Graduate. Stephanie has also been a student service council sponsor and a softball coach during her career at Viking. Stephanie has also mentored new staff members to provide guidance and support throughout the school year. Her leadership is displayed daily and she continues to positively impact the Viking School Community.

One of Stephanie's greatest strengths is her ability to build positive relationships with students, families and staff. Stephanie seeks out opportunities to connect with students and allows them to bring their experiences into the classroom. Her ability to build relationships with students provides a welcoming and safe learning environment in which they can then demonstrate their learning. Stephanie uses hands-on activities, collaborative learning and technology to support students. Stephanie has made a lasting impact on all students as well as the Viking School community. She has planned for start of the year events, back to school night, parent university and district community engagement activities. Viking School students, staff, families and community members are extremely proud to recognize Stephanie for her service.

Regarding the awards, Mayor Tom Hood said, "This annual event honors these outstanding educators and their ongoing commitment to our community. Now in its remarkable 10th year, personally it has been a joy to witness, and I'm proud of how our schools seize the opportunity to spotlight educators who have truly excelled, setting a standard for their peers to aspire to.

Mayor Tom Hood, Donald Henderson of the Henderson Foundation, and each school district's corresponding representatives were present at the Monday, May 6<sup>th</sup> Village Board meeting to award the winners. In addition to a plaque recognizing their achievement, each teachers will be given a monetary contribution from the Henderson Foundation.

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