



COMMUNICATIONS

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For Immediate Release

DISTRICT STARS HONORED AT AIKEN COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS ANNUAL EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION EVENT

During a banquet held at Aiken High School on Thursday, March 21, the District recognized its STARS of Public Education. Aiken County Public Schools' annual employee recognition celebration has expanded over the years,"

ACPSD Superintendent King Laurence shared. "All employees supporting one another and appreciating each other's contributions to our shared work makes tonight beautiful."

The Stars of Public Education event celebrates the best and the brightest throughout the district in seven categories, including the GEM (Giving Even More) of the Year, Professional Staff Member of the Year, District Level Administrator of the Year, Assistant Principal of the Year, Principal of the Year, First Year Teacher of the Year, and Teacher of the Year. School and department-level stars were honored during the March 21 event, and Honor Courts were celebrated for each employee recognition category before District winners were announced.

Each Honor Court member received a special plaque as a symbol of their accomplishments. Through generous sponsorship support, district winners also received a monetary award and a specially selected trophy along with a gold ring to celebrate their honor courtesy of Jostens Rhodes Graduation Services' Platinum Sponsorship. Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, this year's Presenting Sponsor, allowed for a beautiful and memorable evening for all. Financial and in-kind resources from the Special Section in the Aiken Standard to Panera Bread free dessert cards for each winner and nominee are among some of the contributions community businesses dedicated to celebrating our STARS of Public Education. Additional major sponsors included Bridgestone, DreamMaker Bath & Kitchen, H.G. Reynolds Construction Engineers, and SRP Federal Credit Union as Gold Sponsors.

NAMING 2023-2024 STARS OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

After guests celebrated nominees through a slideshow featuring nominees and winners from every school and department for each category over dinner, Ms. Merry Glenna Piccolino, Director of Communications and Community Partnerships, continued the program with recognition of the GEM of the Year Honor Court.

GEM OF THE YEAR AWARD

The 2024-2025 GEM of the Year Award Honor Court included:

- Bonnie Gibbons, Secretary/Bookkeeper, Kennedy Middle School;
- Susan Adams, Media Aide, Millbrook Elementary School;
- Derrick Rouse, Custodian, Mossy Creek Elementary School;
- Tammy Posey, Parent Involvement Aide/Secretary, North Aiken Elementary School; and
- **Tanja Brammer, Instructional Aide, Paul Knox Middle School.**

"The winner of our District GEM of the Year award is described as someone who is patient and empathetic, always finding positivity in what they do and providing hope to students each day," Piccolino shared. "Join me in congratulating our 2024-2025 GEM of the Year winner, Ms. Tanja Brammer."

ACPSD's GEM was quickly surrounded by several family members and friends who had been invited to surprise her.

PROFESSIONAL STAFF MEMBER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Tray Traxler, the District's Chief Financial Officer, welcomed to the stage the 2024-2025 Professional Staff Member of the Year Award Honor Court which included:

- Ashlee O'Neal, Instructional Technology Support Specialist, Instructional Services;
- April Slack, Middle Level Math Support Specialist, Instructional Services;
- **Monica Wells, School Nurse, North Aiken Elementary School;**
- Tina Streubel, School Nurse, Paul Knox Middle School; and
- Mungera Cash, School Psychologist, Special Programs.

"Our District Professional Staff Member of the has shared that advocacy and connecting students to resources is her favorite thing, and her work reflects her passion," Traxler shared as he announced and congratulated the winner, Mrs. Monica Wells.

Just like the newly-named GEM of the Year, Wells and all other District winners that followed quickly found themselves surrounded by their loved ones who had been hidden backstage as they awaited the surprise and celebration.

DISTRICT LEVEL ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR AWARD

Jennifer Hart, the District's Chief Officer of Administration and Human Resources, introduced the District Level Administrator of the Year Award Honor Court.

The District Level Administrator of the Year Award Honor Court included:

- Dustin Fowler, Virtual Learning Coordinator, Aiken iNOVATE;
- Berkeley Postell, Assistant Superintendent of High Schools, Division of Instruction; and
- **Carl White, Director of Student Services, Division of Operations and Student Services.**

"The winner of our District Level Administrator of the Year award is described as an authentic and caring leader who possesses the experience and expertise to handle a myriad of high-pressure situations that are almost a daily presence in a large school district," Hart shared before congratulating the 2024-2025 District Level Administrator of the Year winner, Mr. Carl White.

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR AWARD

Dr. Salvatore Minolfo was honored to recognize administrators he supports through his role as the District's Director of Administration for their dedication to shaping the academic successes of students and cultivating leadership in their buildings.

The Assistant Principal of the Year Award Honor Court included:

- Suman Marks-Johnson, Assistant Principal, Aiken County Career & Technology Center;
- Anna Beth Harbeson, Assistant Principal, Belvedere Elementary School; and
- **Karen Fiery, Assistant Principal, Busbee Elementary School.**

"Our District Assistant Principal of the Year winner is described as someone who has devoted her career and life to her students, giving every ounce of herself to make her school the best it can be," Dr. Minolfo shared as he announced the winner for District Assistant Principal of the Year, Ms. Karen Fiery.

PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR AWARD

Dr. Amy Edwards, the district's Chief Officer of Instruction, welcomed to the stage the 2024-2025 Principal of the Year Award Honor Court which included:

- Michelle Padgett, Principal, Graniteville Elementary School;
- Sheldon Higgenbottom, Principal, Midland Valley High School; and
- Shunte Dugar, Principal, New Ellenton Middle STEAM Magnet School.

"Our District Principal of the Year award-winner is described as a mentor principal who consistently exemplifies the qualities of a true servant leader both personally and professionally," Dr. Edwards shared before congratulating the 2024-2025 Principal of the Year winner, Mrs. Michelle Padgett.

FIRST YEAR TEACHER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Christen Sikes was honored to celebrate the many exceptionally skillful and dedicated new educators she supports through her role as the District's Educator Effectiveness Coordinator.

The First Year Teacher of the Year Award Honor Court included:

“Our District Teacher of the Year winner is described as someone who has an excellent rapport with students and ensures students experience success by challenging their abilities to encourage as much growth and development as possible,” Superintendent Laurence shared as he congratulated the winner for District Teacher of the Year, Mr. Philip Sirk.

STARS OF PUBLIC EDUCATION SCHOOL AND DEPARTMENT-LEVEL WINNERS AND NOMINEES

Congratulations STARS of Public Education winners, as well as nominees in each category.

GEM OF THE YEAR

Dorothy Landy, A.L. Corbett Middle School
Michelle Bush, Aiken County Career & Technology Center
Tammy Bell, Aiken Elementary School
Jody Morgan, Aiken High School
Shephone Ryan, Aiken Intermediate School
Cathey Ferrell, Belvedere Elementary School
Edith Walker-Reed, Busbee Elementary School
Keisha Jackson, Business Services
Marilyn Abellan, Byrd Elementary School
Hope Platt, Center for Innovative Learning
Brook Byers, Chukker Creek Elementary School
Connie Bell, Clearwater Elementary School
Kimberly Pollina, East Aiken School of the Arts
Lynde Ball, Educational Technology
Patricia Young, Gloverville Elementary School
Breannah Cleveland, Graniteville Elementary School
Shirley Hilton, Greendale Elementary School
Debra Townsend, Hammond Hill Elementary School
Debbie Glover, Highland Springs Middle School
Deloris Brown, Human Resources
Rebecca Canalejo, J.D. Lever Elementary School
Teresa Pearson, Jackson STEM Magnet Middle School
Christopher Sims, Jefferson Elementary School
Bonnie Gibbons, Kennedy Middle School
Eugene Eshun Phillips, Langley-Bath-Clearwater Middle School
Michelle McCord, Leavelle McCampbell Middle School
Benjamin Parry, Maintenance Department
Leota Bragg, Midland Valley High School
Susan Adams, Millbrook Elementary School
Derrick Rouse, Mossy Creek Elementary School
James Ingram, New Ellenton Middle STEAM Magnet School
Tammy Posey, North Aiken Elementary School
Pamela Faw, North Augusta Elementary School
Katherine Barrett, North Augusta High School

Stephanie Abney, North Augusta Middle School
Angela Taylor, Oakwood-Windsor Elementary School
Renee Reynolds, Operations & Student Services
Tanja Brammer, Paul Knox Middle School
Jami Mims, Redcliffe Elementary School
Pam Layton, Ridge Spring-Monetta Elementary School
Ashley Bradley, Ridge Spring-Monetta Middle/High School
Shaunna Hay, Schofield Middle School
Regina Brock, Silver Bluff High School

DISTRICT LEVEL ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR

Dustin Fowler, Aiken iNNOVATE
Salvatore Minolfo, Division of Administration & HR
Brenda DeLoache, Federal Programs
Micki Dove, Division of Instruction
Berkeley Postell, Division of Instruction
Phyllis Gamble, Division of Instruction
Carl White, Division of Operations & Student Services

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR

Suman Marks-Johnson, Aiken County Career & Technology Center
Anna Beth Harbeson, Belvedere Elementary School
Karen Fiery, Busbee Elementary School
Krish Risher, North Augusta High School
Sylvia Gay, North Augusta Middle School
Wendy West, Paul Knox Middle School
Patrick Newsome, Ridge Spring Monetta Elementary School
Miranda Fulmer, Ridge Spring-Monetta Middle/High School
Tami Shaffer, South Aiken High School

PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR

Kenneth Lott, Aiken County Career & Technology Center
Jeffery Matthews, Busbee Elementary School
Renaë Enlow, Byrd Elementary School
Lisa Fallaw, East Aiken School of the Arts
Michelle Padgett, Graniteville Elementary School
Caroline Barker, Greendale Elementary School
Sheldon Higgenbottom, Midland Valley High School
Shunte Dugar, New Ellenton Middle STEAM Magnet School
Elisa Sanders-Pee, North Aiken Elementary School
Casey Rogers, Paul Knox Middle School
Callie Herlong, Ridge Spring-Monetta Elementary School
Sidney Johnson, Schofield Middle School
Samuel Fuller, South Aiken High School

FIRST YEAR TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Heather Moore, Aiken Elementary School
Jordan Fernandes, Belvedere Elementary School
Paige Hall, Byrd Elementary School
Angela Huggins, Chukker Creek Elementary School
Julie Griffin, Clearwater Elementary School
Deanna Jowers, Gloverville Elementary School

Ashley DeFore, Graniteville Elementary School
Holly Sharpe, Greendale Elementary School

Melissa Overcash, Homebound

Stacie Sidwell, J.D. Lever Elementary School

Philip Sirk, Jackson STEM Magnet Middle School

Veronica Smith, Jefferson Elementary School

Meredith Parrott, Kennedy Middle School

Amy Buchkeister, Langley-Bath-Clearwater Middle School

Allison Boggess, Leavelle McCampbell Middle School

Samantha Luzzatti, Midland Valley High School

Anna Scaggs, Mossy Creek Elementary School

Anna Scaggs, Mossy Creek Elementary School

Carrissa Brown, New Ellenton Middle STEAM Magnet School