

## 2018 Awesome Staff Award– RSU #34

RSU #34 honors a few staff members each year at the first staff workshop with a special coffee mug. Throughout the year, colleagues may nominate each other for an “Awesome Staff Award.”

Thank you to all of our awesome staff, and to those who took the time to recognize a peer’s efforts and accomplishments!

**Marty Clark** – History comes alive in his class. Learning is engaging, fun and dynamic. As a colleague, he is a mentor and a friend. Over the years, as a coach, teacher and active community member, Marty has touched the lives of countless numbers of graduates of OTHS. Thank You for being so Awesome!

**Dorothy Dawson-Hall** willingly takes on any task or challenge. In addition to coordinating and teaching G/T, she also teaches 8<sup>th</sup> grade math and leads an 8<sup>th</sup> grade advisory group. After school, she organizes robotic teams, including the award-winning Coyote Pups Gamma Team. She knows all of her students well, and advocates tirelessly for all of them. She speaks positively of everyone and focuses on solutions rather than problems. She’s highly qualified for almost everything, and we’re lucky she chooses us.

**Mike Feero** – Often the technology folks are forgotten, until something is broken and we really need them. It is so nice to know when there is an issue you can count on someone so knowledgeable, down-to-Earth and friendly. Mike – your support, sense of humor, and hard work does not go unnoticed. Thank You for being so Awesome!

**Cathy Fox** works hard at her craft. She is willing to challenge herself by implementing new strategies and practices, then honestly assesses and uses the feedback to inform her instruction. She has gone above and beyond with service learning projects since she has been teaching in Alton. The nature trail behind the school and the Alton community garden are testaments to that. Cathy diligently differentiates instruction for her students. She puts in the extra time to research best practices and is willing to put them into practice. Cathy’s plans for her instruction are focused on the standards her students need to master and she tracks progress consistently. Cathy has effective, dependable classroom management and her students respect and enjoy her. The time and effort Cathy puts into her teaching is impressive!

**Bethany Gerrish** had 14 years of teaching experience when she joined the OTHS staff, and we are fortunate enough to reap the benefits. She was a leader in many ways at her previous school, and it didn’t take long for her to become a leader and important part of our team as well. Her content knowledge, experience and work ethic have been invaluable to not only our team, but to other teachers new to our school. She teaches by the “Whatever it takes” philosophy and her students benefit greatly from her endless supply of strategies and patience that help them grow in all aspects of their learning: socially, emotionally, and academically. Strategies that she freely shares with her team. She is a team player through and through.

**Jantha Henry** is responsive to the needs of both colleagues and students. She brings a positive attitude and great flexibility to the classroom every day. Jantha is a master at differentiation allowing all students to access the curriculum in a meaningful way. She also contributes in many ways outside the classroom, including being the co-advisor for Civil Rights Team and volunteering as Assistant Softball Coach.

**Stacy Henry** works hard to bring to her students hands-on science activities. She treats all students with respect and meets their individual needs. Stacy takes time to communicate with parents, keeping them informed about classroom activities. You will always find Stacy looking into next best steps in teaching.

**Erin Hutchinson** – Erin is an amazing staff member who really cares for every student and works hard to meet every need that she is able to meet and seeks help for those she can't. She treats every student with respect and dignity while creating wonderful relationships. She has volunteered to advise the Civil Rights Team at OTHS and has gone above and beyond her regular heavy duty schedule as a special educator. She has attended many workshops and keeps up on best practices to improve her skills and knowledge. Beyond her care with students, she is also a very supportive co-worker as a listening ear, a problem solver and supporter for those who work with her.

Erin Hutchinson – Thank you for being Awesome!

In just two years, **Carol Landers** has had a tremendous impact on the RSU 34 music department. Carol's kind personality, musical talent, great sense of humor, and work ethic are just a few of the gifts she shares each day at LMS and OTES. Carol is very understated and does not receive enough credit for the growth and development of young musicians in our district. It would be impossible to list all the tasks that Carol is asked to do daily, but it is always a guarantee that she will do them well and with a smile. Carol can be seen behind the piano accompanying for the LMS and OTES choruses, photocopying music, arranging band set ups, teaching privately, playing flute at summer band camp, and countless other jobs. It's not one big thing, but hundreds of little things, that make Carol an Awesome Staff member!

**Michael May** is a dedicated educator. He teaches on one of the Freshman teams at OTHS, and brought AP US History back to OTHS two years ago. An avid reader, Mike spends hours of time reading and planning rigorous lessons, as he doesn't just teach history, he builds historians. Students in AP US History have "sold" America's greatest inventions on Shark Tank and roasted and toasted some of our country's prominent figures. The success of his students and the excitement they have for history are a direct result of his dedication and hard work. Mr. May is truly helping our students to become the kind of people who can make this world one of which we are proud. Thank You for being awesome for our students!

**Ann McCluskey** is the heart and soul of our school. She is an amazing person to work with and is a pivotal force in the lives of children who are fortunate enough to have her in class. Ann has special qualities that you don't see every day. It was very apparent to me 23 years ago with our first encounter, that she was something special. She had only been there a day, and I found her handling a crisis skillfully with humor and precision. Needless to say, I was very impressed. She continues handling situations to this day in the same manner, always doing what's best for children and in the process, supporting staff and parents making them feel safe and secure.

Ann always puts others needs before her own, and is the first to jump in and help in any situation with a smile on her face. She quietly and deftly orchestrates the day for some of our most deserving students without expecting any accolades. It is so easy to pass over and overlook the dedication and professionalism that she brings to the job every day. She has touched the lives of so many people in so many different ways. No one is more deserving of this award.

**Erin Murphy** works at all three elementary schools not only in the library but also teaches music at Alton and Bradley schools. She juggles a huge workload on a small budget of supplies and time. She transports crates full of books from one building to another in an effort to create an "interlibrary loan" system so that any of our books located in one of the elementary schools are available to students and

staff in the other schools. Mrs. Murphy is working on her Master's degree in Library Science, and uses her studies to improve the library experience for our students. She is comfortable with all ages from Pre-K to 5<sup>th</sup> grade, and challenges herself to meet their needs and provide everyone with a positive library experience in a wide variety of ways.

Music is Mrs. Murphy's other passion. This year she was able to teach music classes in Alton and Bradley, and instrumental lessons in Alton. In her creative manner she found ways to integrate music and literature. She attends evening functions at all three schools even when it not required, and participates in events such as the LMS Parent-Teacher Band. Along with her dedication, conscientiousness, and hard work, these are a few of the reasons I believe Mrs. Murphy should receive the Awesome Staff Award.

**Tracie Murchison** has added so much to our Leonard Middle School community. She has jumped in with both feet to build community in the 6th grade. Her sense of humor and kind nature are truly infectious. Tracie went out of the way at the end of the year to arrange the Darling's Ice Cream Truck for the last day of school and is always willing to go the extra mile for both colleagues and students.

**Karen Paradis** is an amazing asset to OTES! She continually goes above and beyond her role as a special education teacher and mentor. She strives for excellence in her classroom by supporting her students not only academically, but in all areas in a nurturing manner. Karen keeps the children in her room engaged by creating a fun and successful learning environment. She makes sure to connect her classroom with the activities that are going on throughout the community. She supports her co-workers daily by offering assistance on a regular basis. Throughout the day, Karen is very supportive of her Ed Techs by making sure they are comfortable and their needs and the student's needs are being met.

**Dave Ploch** – In his classroom, you can find the magic of science. Students are engaged in learning in a fun and dynamic way. Beyond the classroom, he is a major supporter of the OTHS swim program and it's unparalleled success for decades. Beyond that, he is an exceptional person. His friendly smile, quick wit and unique sense of humor always provides you with a smile and a new way to think of something. Another legend in the hallways of OTHS, he has positively impacted many many graduates for years. Mr. Ploch – Thank You for being Awesome!

#### **Shianne Priest**

When you meet students where they are and give them a path to what they can become you are creating excellence. You create it one step at a time day after day and that is exactly what Shianne Priest does for our band students. We love going to concerts where we see and hear exceptional students do exceptional things. Thank you Shianne for the excellence you bring to LMS classrooms every day!

**Laura Rhoads** is a compassionate and caring person who would give the shirt off her back for a student or staff member. She always has a smile on her face and has a positive attitude that never wavers. She has a strong love for her students and would do anything to make sure they are safe and taken care of. She is eager to help in any way she can, and would do anything for anyone. She's a team player and a great support to all.

**Jennifer Stone** – Libraries have always had the perception of quiet caves of knowledge. Mrs. Stone's library at OTHS is so much more. Students engage in technology, meaningful discussions while feeling the comforts of a safe place. You are often seen around the building supporting staff and students with your technology and literacy expertise. Thank You for being Awesome!

**Rachel Sullivan** strives to give her students amazing experiences to enhance the learning that goes on in the classroom—whether it be guest speakers, hands-on activities, field trips to connect to service learning or for academic purpose and more. She is always looking for ways to connect learning in her classroom to other classrooms, including Kindergarten. She facilitates the upstairs recycling each week, and with the money earned, she works with students to find a worthy cause—like using earned money to walk to Dollar General to buy animal products to donate to the animal orphanage. She doesn't just teach students what they need to learn, she gives them an experience that will help them never forget their learning.

**Melissa (Lewis) Zabierek** works tirelessly to build relationships with students and to help every student succeed. She is patient and flexible in working with all of her students, seeking to understand the needs and interests of each individual. She regularly works with individuals during class, during academic focus, and after school. She invests a great deal of time and effort to organize meaningful experiences for the 7<sup>th</sup> grade team, like the Invention Convention. Professionally, we count on Melissa for her positive and insightful perspective, and to always support what is best for kids and the school.