

Wakefield Educational Foundation (WEF) recently held their 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Celebration of Learning Ceremony and Reception at Galvin Middle School. Dr. Stephen Zrike honored WEF's special recipients, Dr. Eileen Woods, Dennis O'Leary and Therese Jarmusik. Following are Dr. Zrike's comments honoring recipients for the Impact and Excellence In Education Awards.

**Impact Award: For your demonstration of the enormous impact one person can have in making a difference in our school community.**



### **Dr. Eileen Woods**

It gives me great honor to recognize the next person because I would not be an educator today if it were not for her. Dr. Woods has served as my mentor, my coach and my paradigm of exemplary leadership. Many of you know that I started my educational career as a teacher under her tutelage. When I left her school I thought all leaders were like her and all schools were as warm and nurturing- After a few years in urban schools, I quickly realized that I had seen a master at her craft, a truly gifted leader of people and a champion for students. When we were in need of a transitional leader for the Walton this summer, my first call was to Dr. Woods and she thankfully agreed to join the team. An then there was immediate panic, I remember thinking- she better be better than good because folks were aware of our professional relationship and I questioned, is she has strong as I remember?

I am proud tonight to give her an award that I can honestly say that I did not nominate her for. All year long the accolades have poured in for Dr. Woods from staff, parents and community members to the point where I have had to say to people, I know, I know I worked for her once. In all seriousness, I have been in awe of the impact she has had on this community in a mere 7 months. She continues to be a learner and is an even better leader today than when I worked with her over a decade ago. These are just a few very telling comments from the Walton staff:

- She pushed us to be the very best teachers we can be and supports us in any way she can.
- She has taken great strides to point Walton in a progressive direction.
- Eileen has an incredible gift in seeing the big picture, prioritizing, and guiding her staff to streamline their own goals.
- Dr. Woods' wisdom and abundant experience have been immeasurably helpful and calming.
- She is passionate about education and meeting the needs of students with curriculum that is rigorous, yet achieves results.
- Dr. Woods has been dedicated to meeting the needs of students, staff and families from the moment she stepped in the building.

I have also had our principals, many of them who are new to Wakefield comment that having her here has been like a built in coach and mentor for them. Not to mention the superintendent who she is never afraid to tell exactly what she thinks of decisions he makes.

It is with great honor that I have the opportunity to celebrate the impact that Dr. Woods has had on Wakefield and I would also like to celebrate her birthday! Thank you for everything Dr. Woods, your legacy will be felt in Wakefield for years to come.

**Excellence in Education: For your years of dedication and commitment to the students, staff and community of the Wakefield Public Schools in creating a sound foundation for lifelong learning and achievement**



## **Dennis O'Leary**

Mr. O'Leary is on the verge of completing his 30<sup>th</sup> year in the Wakefield Public Schools. The proud author of the slogan, *It is a Great Day to be a Warrior* (he really should copyright it!) he has been an alternative school teacher, High School Summer School/ GED Director 1988-1994, acting housemaster and assistant Principal for the last 19 years.

Mr. O'Leary is a skilled, versatile administrator who deftly manages building operations, supports students and families in navigating complex issues and coaches teachers in their classrooms...all in a day's work. He is a knowledgeable administrator who stands in front of the student body and delivers motivating words they remember and recount for a lifetime; a mentor who inspires and encourages teachers to grow and improve their craft; and an experienced educator that provides tearful, grateful parents with words of wisdom and care to guide their children.

In preparing my comments for today, I think his colleague Mr. Beebe said it best as he described what he has learned from Mr. O'Leary. *He taught me simple things to keep me focused that I lean on today such as you don't have to like the behavior to love the child, it's two different things. The love is unconditional so you get excited about the next day as another chance to make a difference in changing that behavior and help a student take positive steps in their lives. He truly loves every student in our building and wants desperately for them to feel safe, welcome, and supported in what he often refers to as their second home. He also reminds us that we spend more time with the community's kids than we do with our own so they are part of our family and we feel their victories and losses in the same vein. He regularly tells students that their time at Wakefield High School matters. Annually he speaks to students about the dash between their four years at the school as being so important because it defines the extent to which students are prepared for life. The dash is a reminder to us of the big picture- that the time in High School is about molding and shaping our future, not the rat race of getting into college. Finally, Mr. O'Leary's commitment to students extends beyond their graduation and students know that he will be a fixture for them any time they return home.*

Mr. O'Leary is a true warrior and it is a truly great day when we can recognize him for his contributions to so many young people.



### **Therese Jarmusik**

The best way to describe Ms. Jarmusik is that she is the Galvin's glue. Over the last 5 years, the Galvin has undergone principal changes, the passing of a long-tenured principal, a construction project, a new building and a new schedule. Through it all (including a stint as acting principal) Ms. Jarmusik has been the constant taking on any role she has been asked to assume. Whether it has been creating schedules for 1100 students and 100+ staff, supervising and evaluating 20+ staff, filling vacancies at 6:45am for teachers who are out sick, organizing MCAS and PARCC testing schedules, serving on multiple district wide committees, communicating daily with parents, while managing discipline and acting as a cheerleader for students. Additionally, Ms. Jarmusik has been open to change- although her career spans decades in public/parochial schools she is always interested in learning new approaches. She might give me a look at first, but then she dives in if she thinks it is good for children. I want to end my comments about Therese with the thoughts of her sidekick assistant principal Mr. Teatrault (I want to be sure that I attribute these to him, so I don't get in trouble!).

*Ms. Jarmusik is known as a hard-nosed administrator. She holds students to the highest of standards. Some of the most challenging students to walk the halls of the Galvin Middle school are the frequent flyers in her office, the students who many people give up on.. I have seen these students come back as young adults and give Therese the biggest hug and whisper 'thank you' to her. Don't get me wrong, these students are the reason she gets her hair colored monthly. But as tough as she can be, Therese refuses to ever... ever... give up on them. Ms. Jarmusik also knows everything about everyone in Wakefield, be careful...because she is related to everyone. But she uses these relationships to build rapport with students and their families and with countless community organizations.*

Please join me in honoring Ms. Jarmusik for the excellence in education award!