



P R E S S R E L E A S E

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
March 24, 2009

CONTACT: Jean Henshaw
Public Relations Specialist
Berks County Intermediate Unit
610-987-8423; jeahen@berksiu.org

BCIU to Announce Winner of 2009 Annie Sullivan Award *Prestigious award recognizes local educators for their outstanding service*

READING, PA – The Berks County Intermediate Unit (BCIU) will honor the nominees and winner of the 2009 Annie Sullivan Award at a reception and award ceremony at 5 p.m., Thursday, April 2, 2009, at the BCIU's River's Chase building, 1111 Commons Blvd., Reading, PA 19605. Colleagues, friends, and family will gather to recognize the outstanding service and dedication of these individuals to the advocacy and well-being of students with disabilities.

The 2009 Annie Sullivan Award nominees are:

Donna Capriotti, Daniel Boone Area and Exeter Township school districts

Patrick Carl, Antietam School District

Margaret Carter, Hamburg Area School District

Daniel Crigler and Robert Boland, Wilson School District

Lori Gavalla, Tulpehocken Area School District

Kate Hofherr, Twin Valley School District

Kimberly Myers, Daniel Boone Area School District

Jared Sparks, Oley Valley School District

Brady Stauffer, Governor Mifflin School District

The Annie Sullivan Award is given in recognition of an individual who has worked to encourage the understanding and promotion of students with disabilities in his or her school or community. Annie Sullivan was Helen Keller's devoted teacher and mentor who was nearly blind herself. After treatment, she regained her sight and committed herself to teaching the blind and deaf. This year marks the 23rd annual presentation of the award in Berks County.

For more information on this event, contact Janette Weaver at 610-987-8511.

Below are summaries of the nomination forms submitted by school district personnel.

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NOMINEE INFORMATION

Donna Capriotti, School Social Worker, Daniel Boone Area School District and all Exeter Township District Schools

- Works with districts' emotional support students, but often works with any student, parent, family or school staff member
- Technically an employee of Daniel Boone Area School District, but has provided contracted social work services to the schools within the Exeter Township School District for more than 15 years.
- Has devoted a great deal of time to providing ongoing training and detailed support to teachers of students in need of assistance
- Often takes a leadership role in dealing with students' issues, from consulting with private doctors and therapists, to providing training for parents and school staff, to setting up meetings with various community agencies, and then taking parents and students to the appointment with the agency.

Patrick Carl, Life Skills Teacher, Antietam Middle-Senior High School

An inspirational educator who works with the district's most challenged students.

- Often works concurrently with as many as 12 students in his classroom who have a variety of challenging disorders.
- Dedicated to learning more about students' disorders in order to better serve them.
- Continually upbeat and positive, working tirelessly for his students.
- Integrates his students into society by often taking them out for "life" experiences, such as bowling, restaurants, shopping, and more.

Margaret Carter, Emotional Support Teacher, Tilden Elementary Center

- Serves students in need of emotional support in grades K-5.
- Professional, experienced, enthusiastic, and dedicated to her students.
- Exudes a "can do" attitude.
- Puts in countless hours of her own time reading and researching new ideas to help her students be successful.
- Is quick to offer her support and time to other teachers who have students presenting behavioral problems.
- Goes "above and beyond" in all aspects of her career and makes a real difference in her students' lives.

Daniel Crigler and Robert Boland, Seniors, Wilson High School

- Created a golf tournament held in summer 2008 to benefit students with disabilities and set up an Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) fund through the Berks County Community Foundation (BCCF).
- Raised more than \$7,000 via the golf tournament.
- Currently working to hold the golf tournament again in summer 2009.
- Golf tournament was part of their senior project, although the two students devoted far more than the 40 volunteer hours required.
- Worked with representatives from the BCCF to determine what criteria to use to allocate the funds and disseminate the monies.
- Both students excel academically with rigorous schedules filled with advanced placement courses.

Lori Gavalla, Learning Support Teacher, Tulpehocken Junior High School

- Provides support to special education students co-taught in general education classes, learning support classes, and in the academic support room.
- Also helps students without disabilities who are struggling academically.
- Admired by parents, teachers, administrators and her students.
- Works endless hours to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students.
- Constantly searches for teaching techniques that will improve learning outcomes.
- Each of her students has improved his or her performance and none are failing any course.
- Students say, “Her class is not a room, but a home.”

Kate Hofherr, Learning Support Teacher, Twin Valley Middle School

- Helps students with varying levels of disabilities with life skills, autistic, and itinerant learning support.
- Exceptional educator who sees students for their “abilities” rather than their “disabilities.”
- Commitment to ensuring that all students make progress is unmatched and contagious to her colleagues.
- Worked tirelessly one year when she had several students with severe disabilities to ensure that the students would be included in general education classes for the entire school day.
- Went to great lengths for a child using a wheelchair to ensure he was included in all of his classes. The student participated in marching band, jazz band, dances, and more.
- Twin Valley Middle School has been changed forever for the better because of the dedication of this outstanding teacher.

Kimberly Myers, Second Grade Teacher, Monocacy Elementary Center

- Five students in her regular education classroom of 17 students have special needs, including a student with cerebral palsy and another with Down syndrome.
- Works closely with special education teachers and the teaching assistants who work in her classroom with the special needs students in order to best meet those students' needs.
- Goes above and beyond each day.
- Strives for students in her classroom to be accepting of others who are different from them and models this acceptance everyday.

Jared Sparks, Special Education Teacher, Oley Valley High School

- As a high school learning and emotional support teacher, he has a caseload of 20 students identified as having disabilities.
- Notorious for assisting regular education staff members in making classroom instruction rigorous and relevant for all students.
- Involved with Classroom For the Future and demonstrates the use of technology to maintain organization in order to assist students in fulfilling their academic obligations.
- Brings a sense of confidence to his students who struggle with day-to-day tasks of organization and processing large amounts of information.
- Acts as a co-teacher in secondary English, social studies, math and science curricula.
- Collaborates with more than 40 teachers regarding student progress and specially designed instruction.
- Spends many hours with Individualized Education Plan (IEP) teams to develop meaningful programs and specially designed instruction for his students.
- An exemplary 21st century teacher.

Brady Stauffer, Sixth Grade Teacher, Governor Mifflin Intermediate School

- Works closely with students in his regular education class who have emotional issues (Emotional Support students)
- Takes extra time to change his classroom methods so that the Emotional Support students can participate with the general education class.
- Open to alternative ways of handling sensitive issues and uses personal and family stories to bond with students.
- The number of students completing a "positive" sixth-grade academic year increases dramatically when they are placed in his classroom.

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