



NEWS RELEASE

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53rd Annual Rolfs Educational Foundation Awards Honor Four Deserving Teachers of the West Bend School District

West Bend — During an all-school assembly and all-staff meetings, four teachers of the West Bend School District today were awarded the Rolfs Educational Foundation Award for their exceptional service as educators. This is the 53rd time the Rolfs Educational Foundation has given the awards and Claire Rolfs of the foundation was on hand to deliver the awards and \$1,000 gift to each winner.

The award goes to a teaching staff member in each of the four categories: elementary school, middle school, high school, and special services. Nominations for the award are submitted by students in grades 5-12, parents, community members, peers, or administration. Qualified staff must have completed a minimum of three years of employment, must not have received the award in the last two years, and must receive at least two nominations.

The 2024 winners include:

Kristen Becker

English Teacher, West Bend West High School

Kristen has served as an English teacher with the West Bend School District since August 2001. She serves as a leader in the English department, spearheading curriculum revisions and mentoring new teachers.

Her passion for literature is contagious. She brings classic novels to life, not just through traditional lessons, but through creative activities, from bridge card games inspired by *The Help* to a roaring 1920s party celebrating *The Great Gatsby*.

Kristen's impact goes even further. She recognizes that learning happens everywhere and attends student events and offers support during difficult times. She understands the importance of mental health, actively supporting the initiatives of the Youth Impact Club.

Alexandra Ehlke**Special Education Teacher, West Bend East High School**

Alex Ehlke joined the West Bend School District in September 2007 as a special education paraprofessional and in 2011 made the switch to a special education teacher. Her dedication to her students shines through in everything she does.

Alex is a passionate and reflective educator who constantly seeks new ways to engage students. Her impact extends far beyond her classroom. She actively shares her expertise as the head of the special education department, is a key member of the WBSD Way team, and an advisor of the student council. Her ability to connect with students is remarkable and she creates a positive learning environment where every student feels valued and supported.

Simply, Alex exemplifies the qualities of a truly deserving Rolfs Award recipient. Her dedication to student success, collaborative spirit, and passion for education make a profound impact in the high school community.

Janet Jackson**Spanish Teacher, Badger Middle School**

Janet Jackson is described as more than only a Spanish teacher at Badger Middle School, rather she is “a weaver of magic, transforming ordinary classrooms into vibrant cultural experiences.”

Janet has been with the West Bend School District since August 2004. Her passion for the Spanish language is infectious, evident in the immersive activities she creates—from bustling cafes where students cook and serve in Spanish, to fashion shows that showcase different cultures.

Janet takes the time to connect with each child, making them feel like an important part of something bigger and is a tireless champion for extracurricular activities where she leads assemblies and coaches forensics. What truly sets Janet apart is her unwavering dedication to her students' well-being. Janet is more than just a teacher; she's an inspiration.

Jenny Taylor**First Grade Teacher, Fair Park Elementary School**

Throughout her 19 years with the West Bend School District, Jenny has served as a kindergarten, first, third, and fourth grade teacher. Whatever the grade, she ignites a passion for learning, creates an inviting environment for students, and leaves a lasting impact on every person she works with.

Her classroom is a haven for young learners. Her calm and authentic nature puts students at ease, allowing them to feel safe and valued. She has a magical ability to connect with each child, fostering a sense of belonging and establishing an atmosphere where everyone thrives.

She readily takes on new challenges, seeking out the best practices and support systems to help her students and fellow teachers alike. She is a team player, always willing to step in when needed, to enrich any grade level with her expertise.

The West Bend Joint School District #1 is proud to serve nearly 6,000 students and their families from the city of West Bend, villages of Jackson and Newburg, and townships of Barton, Polk, Trenton, Jackson, West Bend, and Addison. We strive to ensure that every student is given the opportunity to reach their potential through academics, the arts, and co-curricular activities. Within our community-based 4K program, Head Start program, five elementary schools (K-4), one intermediate school (5-6), one middle school (7-8), and two high schools (9-12), families can expect a caring, inclusive learning environment that supports the development of the whole child. Visit www.west-bend.k12.wi.us for more information.

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