

Butler Eagle

Red Apple Awards praise teaching, community work

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FRANKLIN TWP — Eleven educators were honored Wednesday night at the Red Apple Awards ceremony hosted by the United Way of Butler County.

Award winners are Butler County educators who exemplify leadership and outstanding dedication to students and the community.

Winners are selected from nominees from each public school district, the Butler County Vocational-Technical School, **Butler County Community College**, Slippery Rock University and preschool educators.

Winners each earn a \$500 grant for their schools to buy resources for students.

Here are the teachers who were honored:

Carin Rasp, Lifesteps preschool teacher

Rasp has been working at Lifesteps for 19 years and has been a preschool teacher for 16. She always knew she wanted to be a teacher, inspired by her mother, Ruth Blank. Rasp lives in Evans City on an 88-acre dairy farm with her husband and one of her two daughters.

She also promotes the importance of dairy with the Butler County Dairy Promotion Team

Kimberly Thomas, McQuiston Elementary School kindergarten to fourth grade special education teacher

Thomas has been teaching in the Butler School District for 12 years.

This school year, Thomas began the Backpack Initiative Program, which helps McQuiston students who need weekend food items. She also enjoys spending time with her husband and volunteering for her three daughters' extracurricular activities.

Matthew Bates, Karns City High School English teacher

He has taught in the Karns City School District since 1994.

Bates teaches a night class in BC3's College in High School program, advises the Karns City

High school Believers in Christ Club and assisted with the school's peer leadership program. Bates is married with four children.

Shawna Peters, Mars High School German teacher

Peters has been teaching in the Mars School District since 1999.

She works to bring exchange students to the school through the American Field Service Club at Mars and has taken Mars students on trips to Europe four times. Peters also organizes the Mars High School Treasures for Children program through the Salvation Army, collecting more than 100 gifts for children during Christmas.

She is married with two daughters.

Laura Campbell, Dassa McKinney Elementary School fourth grade teacher

Campbell has spent 15 years teaching in the Moniteau School District.

She helps with community activities, especially volunteering to support the autism community since her own son was diagnosed on the autism spectrum at 3 years old.

Timothy Parish, Evans City Middle School fifth grade teacher

Parish has taught in the Seneca Valley School District for 32 years, and he earned his undergraduate degree from Westminster College and finished his graduate work with Slippery Rock University.

He helped establish the Little Creek Natural Trail, a nine-acre outdoor classroom. He also coaches football at New Castle High School and formerly coached power lifting for Lawrence County's Special Olympic Team.

Rebecca Suesser, Slippery Rock Elementary School fourth grade teacher

Suesser teaches at the same elementary school she attended growing up as a lifelong resident of Slippery Rock. She has taught first, fourth and fifth grade.

Michael Losk, Knoch High School business and technology teacher

Losk has taught in the South Butler School District for 12 years with 14 total years of teaching. He has redesigned computer and technology electives at Knoch High School and introduced a robotics program in the classroom. In addition, he has implemented four engineering courses from Project Lead the Way in both middle and high school.

Amy Ellison, Butler County Area Vocational Technical School cosmetology instructor

Ellison graduated from the vo-tech in 1989. She began as a substitute at the vo-tech in 2001, now serving as a full-time instructor.

Ellison lives in Butler with her husband and son.

Chris Calhoun, **Butler County Community College** professor and program coordinator for Park and Recreation Management Program

Calhoun has been a professor and program coordinator at BC3 since 1984.

He has worked as a wildlife conservation education specialist and a lead water rescue instructor trainer with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. He is a member of the Pennsylvania Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Team and is the assistant chief for the Butler County Team 300 Water Rescue Team.

Jennifer Willford, Slippery Rock University assistant professor of psychology
She developed and directs the psychology and neuroscience track at SRU.
The Education Impact Council of the United Way and XTO Energy sponsored the 12th annual event at the Atrium.

Other sponsors are the Pittsburgh Association for the Education of Young Children, the Early Care and Education Council, Hunter Truck Sales, BASF, BC3, state Sen. Scott E. Hutchinson, Armstrong, and the United Auto Workers Local 3303.