

Thirty-first Annual Employee Recognition Dinner

May 16, 2022



Thanks to our friends at TCU for underwriting the P-H-M Employee Recognition Dinner

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Program

Master of Ceremonies

Seth Molnar, Director of Human Resources

Welcoming Remarks

Dr. Jerry Thacker, Superintendent

Elementary Teacher of the Year

Amanda Fox Elsie Rogers Elementary School

Secondary Teacher of the Year

Becky Hope Penn High School

Award to Teachers of the Year

Jennifer Turnblom, Executive Director Penn-Harris-Madison Education Foundation

Classified Employee of the Year

Julie Demske
Custodian-Schmucker Middle School

Invocation

Bob Thompson,
Director of Alternative Education and Special Projects

Dinner

10, 15, 20, 25, 30 and 35
Year Service Award Presentations
Jeanne Rehlander and Shelli Treely

Retirement Recognition Awards

Dr. Jerry Thacker Chris Riley, President, Board of School Trustees Dawn Bachtel Admin. Assistant to the Superintendent

♦ Thanks to Teachers Credit Union for underwriting the P-H-M Employee Recognition Dinner.

Service Awards

35 Year Service Award

Cynthia Batalis - Mary Frank Vickie Marshall - Grissom Jeanne Rehlander - Horizon

Shelly Sierzputowski - Schmucker Trent Yeoman - Penn

30 Year Service Award

Jodi Adkins - Penn Patrick Barrier - Penn Dawn Boulac - Penn Raoul Donati - Penn

Sandra Golichowski - Bittersweet

Joann Hartline - Horizon Sheri Hedrick - Bittersweet

Renee Johanson - Prairie Vista Rebecca Macht - Walt Disney Sheri Miller - Grissom Peggy Reisdorf - Prairie Vista Sharon Richard - Elm Road Lisa Soto Kile - ESC

Kristin Watson - Elsie Rogers

25 Year Service Award

Stephanie Baer - Bittersweet Louise Black - Moran Rebecca Brown - Penn Darlene Davis - Transportation Jenny Forkner - ESC Renee Gappa - Ex. Ed.

Phillip Hoffman - Custodian Marsha Hudak - Auxiliary Carrie Katz - Transportation Loriann Kelly - Transportation

Lisa Langfeldt - Horizon

Jennifer McCarthy - Bittersweet

Patricia Mills - Horizon Keith O'Connell - Penn Patrick O'Malley - Discovery Dorene Pond - Elm Road David Sears - Schmucker Paula Sobecki - Transportation Edward Wade - Custodian Angelique Wagley - Prairie Vista Marcy Wiseman - Prairie Vista Pennie Wood - Bittersweet Amy Zimmer - Penn Robert Wentroble - Moran

20 Year Service Award

Jennifer Curry - Horizon Maureen Donat - Elsie Rogers Sean Galiher - Penn Angela Gouker - Grissom Kathy Green - Transportation Rebecca Hickey - Elm Road Heather Holycross - Kids Club Rebecca Hope - Penn

Michele Hoppers - Prairie Vista Kimberly Kalman - Mary Frank

Donna Kelly - ESC Shelly Maxwell - Mary Frank Sheryl McGrail - Schmucker Tracy Megyesi - Penn Carrie Mumaw - Prairie Vista Kristi Myers - Discovery Elizabeth Peck - Discovery Phyllis Powell - Transportation Lindsay Schirripa - Northpoint Kori Woods - Northpoint

Service Awards-continued

15 Year Service Award

Caelea Armstrong - Penn Bruce Bergeron - Penn Thea Bolinger - Food Service Jacqueline Britton - Elm Road Wendi Buckley - Ex. Ed. Sandra Budd - Grissom Sara Burger - Transportation Christy Clark - Elm Road Mary Clark - Moran Danielle Duvall-Cundiff - Penn Bradley Harper - Penn Shellie Harshberger - Penn Chad Hershberger - Discovery Anna King - Mary Frank Robert Kowalinski - Grissom Catherine Maes - Penn Kristyn Martin - Schmucker James Mixon - Technology James Modlin - Schmucker Ruth Neff - Food Service Lisa Parker - Northpoint

Jason Pikuza - Bittersweet

Katherine Beruben - Penn

Sherri Potts - Bittersweet Kristie Reynolds - Penn James Rhoads - Penn Christine Riffel - Grissom Larry Roher Jr. - Transportation Victoria Roush - ESC Amy Scoles - Walt Disney Allison Secaur - Penn Virginia Shafer - Penn Brenda Speedy - Schmucker Matthew Stallter - Technology Ashlev Stoffl - Kids Club Scott Thompson - Penn Hollie Truckowski - Elsie Rogers Kristi Ulrich - Penn Kristi Vandvariff - Moran Cheryl Vargo - Meadow's Edge Tresur Whisman - Bittersweet Deanna Wisler - Penn Elizabeth Zachary - Ex. Ed.

Stacy Zack - Prairie Vista

10 Year Service Award

William Bittle - Penn Bradley Boyd - Penn Thomas Brown - Transportation Thomas Burkett - Schmucker Jill Chesnutt - Transportation Brandon Coleman - Elm Road Kathryn Cox - Meadow's Edge Robi Davidson - Walt Disney Betsy Dunham - Penn Sarah Dwigans - Penn Anne Katrine Eskildsen - Northpoint Ashleigh Heatherly - Walt Disney Lindsay Helman- Mary Frank Mary Hinton - Elm Road Michelle Hunt - Transportation Wendy Hurley - Schmucker Kari James - Prairie Vista Jennifer Kauffman - Kids Club

Janet Larson - Penn Natalie MacRae-Waggoner - Ex. Ed. Lindsay Marquette - Schmucker Wavne Maxwell - Maintenance Beth Nemeth - Meadow's Edge Sharon Obert - Meadow's Edge John Pickard - Transportation Karen Powers - Bittersweet Jennifer Sinclair - Madison Retha Stork - Prairie Vista Kristina Ungerecht - Food Service Sarah Wagner - Schmucker Linda Weber - Transportation John Westra - Penn Bridget Williams - Penn Timothy Williams - Transportation Tammy Yoder - Food Service Margaret Youngblood - Northpoint Ashley Zachary - Horizon

Elementary Teacher of the Year

Amanda Fox 4th Grade Teacher Elsie Rogers Elementary School

Being named P-H-M Elementary Teacher of the Year is the latest among Amanda Fox's awards. At the end of April, she was chosen as one of the recipients of the 2022 Michiana Forty under 40 class. The program recognizes young adults, professionals, executives and leaders, under the age of 40, achieving outstanding professional success while also engaging in his/her community through charitable and civic involvement.

Back in February, Fox was named a Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST). This is the highest honor bestowed by the United States to K-12 science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and/or computer science teachers. President Joe Biden named 117 teachers and Fox was among the national winners!

Fox's colleague and fellow teacher Becky Richhart nominated Fox for P-H-M Elementary Teacher of the Year partially because of her passion of "devising ways to incorporate computer science concepts into existing STEM curriculum."

Ms. Richhart recounted how recently Fox had her students create book reports and multiplication games using a free block-based programming website. She led her students in a "telephone style" game designed to demonstrate how different parts of a computer communicate when it's computing.

One of the things that stands out the most about Fox is her collaboration with ND Department of Computer Science & Engineering on various research efforts funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF). The NSF grants funded a K-6 ND computer science summer program, as well as Prairie Vista after-school coding classes where Fox used to teach. She was also the first teacher sponsor of the VEX Robotics team at Prairie Vista and was the Project Lead the Way teacher.

Last summer while developing content for her classroom, Fox participated in research activities alongside Notre Dame grad students as part of RET (National Science Foundation Research Experiences for Teachers), a program which is typically aimed at high school teachers.

Fox was among the first cohort of teachers to help K-8 teachers develop age-appropriate curriculum to introduce students to computer science within existing STEM curricula. She also contributed to developing a framework for K-12 schools to meet new state computer science standards. Fox also established a northern Indiana chapter of the Computer Science Teachers Association (CSTA).

Over her eight years at P-H-M, she has "used computer science to deepen the computational thinking skills for her students," said Ms. Richhart.

Secondary Teacher of the Year

Becky Hope Art Teacher Penn High School

Her friendly and energetic personality is what Becky Hope is known for. People are drawn to her. She's an art teacher, comedian, colleague and mentor and loved by everyone she meets and teaches.

"She is one of the most positive, creative, and supportive people that I've ever worked with. She is loved by her students and coworkers alike. I can't think of anyone else more deserving of this honor," said fellow Penn Art teacher and nominator Ms. Barb Miller.

Hope is the PLC Leader for Penn's Visual Arts Department, teaches AP Studio Art class, manages the Senior Showcase, sponsor's student Art Club. She has also helped establish, run and expand P-H-M's elementary summer Visual Arts Academy.

"I am proud of the Visual Arts Academy which provides an opportunity for our youngest artists and P-H-M students to be creators, listeners, questioners, and writers about art," said Hope. "I feel fortunate every day to work with students who are willing to be challenged, to explore and investigate. ... Also I am thankful for all of the fellow teachers who provide inspiration and support for all the young learners in our classrooms."

The Visual Arts Academy partners with the University of Notre Dame's Snite Art Museum to share museum art pieces that students can study and use as an inspiration for creating their own art pieces and writing projects.

The Academy has also made it possible for the high school students volunteers to participate in Notre Dame's Apprentice Program. Hope encourages her students to get experience displaying and selling their artwork at such events as South Bend's Art Beat and the P-H-M Education Foundation's Penn Student Art show at Granger's Max Black Fine Arts Studio. She also lends her guidance and talents for numerous activities and charitable events, including making decorations and selfie stations for Exceptional Education's annual student dances.

Classified Employee of the Year

Julie Demske Head Custodian Schmucker Middle School

Trying to keep up with and track of Schmucker Head Custodian Julie Demske is a challenge on most days. On the morning of Monday, May 2, Principal Dr. Lavon Dean-Null was trying to pull off the surprise announcement of Classified Employee of the Year and it was no different. Principal Dean-Null had the Front Office radio Julie to come to the school's WSMS studios to fix an emergency; however, she was on the roof! Since it was during morning announcements, Julie thought maybe there was a light out or something. But as soon as she walked into the studio, right on que, and saw and heard Dr. Thacker talking about P-H-M's Classified Employee of the Year, she knew what was up.

Julie was so touched with the honor that it brought her to tears. Thank you to Carla Wisler who nominated Julie and has worked with her for three years.

Julie is a Penn graduate, Class of '88. She started working at P-H-M when she was 21 as a bus operator; she also trained drivers for their CDL. Julie was a bus operator for 11 years and then left to pursue another career. Fortunately for P-H-M, she came back in 2011 as a custodian and earned the position of Head Custodian of Schmucker Middle School in 2015.

Julie says she enjoys her job and Schmucker "because of the amazing administration team and the staff they make you feel like you 'belong' here. The kids are the reason we take so much pride in what we do here and that is to make sure this school is clean and ready everyday for students and guests. I am very humbled by the nomination and have to say I am one of those people who give 110% to anything I am doing. Thank you again for the consideration of this award."

Honored Retirees

Michele Ball Marsha Hilfman Mike Seger Teacher **ESP** Administrator Timothy Barger Marsha Hudak Joseph Sierzputowski Teacher Custodian Auxiliary Dorinda Bond Carrie Katz Shelly Sierzputowski Teacher Bus Operator Teacher Nancy Breidenbach Beth Kummeth Margo Skeels Auxiliary Teacher Auxiliary Sandra Budd James Langfeldt Jaqueline Smith Teacher Teacher Auxiliary Polly Corpe Kristan Lenig Linda Stevenson Teacher **ESP** Auxiliary Nancy Demeulenaere Melvin Lenig Kathy Trusty **ESP** Teacher **ESP** Peter DeKever Ann Lira Linda Varga Teacher Teacher Auxiliary Michael Fonck Marcia Messer John Vegh Auxiliary Teacher Auxiliary Jennifer Forray James Mueller Linda Vegh Auxiliary Night School **ESP** Tamara Gizewski Mary Nicolini Laura Walker Administrator Teacher **ESP** Patricia Green Bijana Pavlina Madeline Watkins **ESP ESP** Teacher Johanna Gregory Dorene Pond Robert Wentroble Teacher Teacher Teacher Joann Hartline Anne Marie Reininga Deborah Wright Teacher Teacher Bus Operator James Schmidt Trent Yeoman Patricia Heidkamp **ESP** Teacher Teacher

Ferne Schneider

Custodian

David Herron

Custodian

Retirees

Questions

What is your favorite memory or what did you like most about working at P-H-M?

What words of advice would you give to your fellow colleagues?

What new adventure awaits for you in retirement?

Michele Ball Teacher 28 Years of Service

There are so many memories that come to mind, but one of my favorite parts of working for P-H-M would be the connections/relationships formed over the many years that continue to be an important part of my life. I count among my friends many former teachers, colleagues and students. This will sound cliché, but when you truly love what you do, it isn't work.

The only advice I have for my colleagues would be to never pass up a chance to get involved! Whether it be coaching, starting a new club, sponsoring an existing club, judging quiz bowl, or just going to watch your students in extracurricular activities. This brings so much more to your life! You will never regret getting involved and making those lasting connections with your students! Teaching is so much more than just disseminating information in the classroom.

Dominic and I are ready to travel and spend time with our adult children. Being able to vacation during non-peak times will be wonderful!

Polly Corpe Teacher 39 Years of Service

I remember my first day in August of 1983; most things have changed, but the optimism and anticipation at the beginning of each year was always the same

I was fortunate to be able to teach with my dad, Dave Geyer, for 20 plus years. Those years were priceless. One of the highlights of my career is being able to visit cadet teaching students at our elementary and middle schools and catching up with former cadet teaching students who are not teachers and administrators. The pride and joy I feel when I see former students pursuing a teaching career with the same passion that I had.

Words of advice: Be passionate about the teaching profession. It is more than a job or something that you just do.

Enjoy!

Tamara Gizewski Administratrator 24 Years of Service

I am very thankful of all the opportunities P-H-M has given to me the past 24 years. I must say my fondest memories are opening Meadow's Edge Elementary in 1998 as the secretary/treasurer and creating the P-H-M family atmosphere that the new school and staff deserved. My nine years at Meadow's Edge are my proudest years.

Always remember we are all here for the 11,000 plus students. Always make decisions that will have a direct positive impact on them. For all of you that have a significant other, always make time for each other and cherish the time you have together.

I don't have a specific adventure that awaits me. I am just anxious to be able to say YES to anything fun that comes my way!

Johanna Gregory Teacher 17 Years of Service

Spending the past eight years teaching Spanish in the Early College Academy set the stage to turn colleagues into friends and to bring about such an incredibly meaningful teaching experience in ways too varied and numerous to describe. The five core teachers forged a special bond as we spent four years with the Class of 2018 (our beloved Legacy Cohort). All of us shared the best and worst of times! Many colleagues/friends have been added along the way as the Academy expanded. Those memorable years and this wonderful group of people continue to be a source of both gratification and gratitude. A los maestros del pasillo, ahora y antes: gracias por sus amistades y por tantos momentos especiales. Fue un placer completo. Merci, Danke, and Arigato.

Model the behavior, courtesies, and work ethic that you expect from your students. Reflect, evolve, and create. Get to know teachers in other content areas and you will be surprised. Go to school events and you will be inspired.

After 26 years in this extraordinary profession, I know that I will always be a teacher. My hope is to segue into copy editing. In addition, I plan to enjoy a different pace of life being with my family and friends, as much as possible, and also to enjoy as many interesting events and adventures as possible.

Joann Hartline Teacher 30 Years of Service

Working for P-H-M gave me the opportunity to meet and make many friends I will have for a lifetime.

In my opinion the best words of advice are, work with your coworkers as a team. "The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team." Phil Jackson.

Many new adventures await me in retirement. I look forward to visiting my children and grandchildren in Texas, Arizona, Michigan and traveling to new places with my husband.

Marsha Hudak Auxilary 25 Years of Service

Favorite P-H-M memory: Tricking Matt Hapke that the whole department was interviewing for other jobs on the day of his first staff meeting as Tech Director.

Words of advice: Treat all of your students and fellow employees as if they were your family. Be kind.

New adventures in retirement: Travel, grandchildren and classes in cooking, photography and whatever else seems interesting.

Thank you PHM for so many great co-workers at Elm, ESC, and to the awesome staff in Technology.

Beth Kummeth Teacher 32 Years of Service

"All my life I wanted to be a Guardsmen, work, work, work, work,"

This is the athletic chant heard at our games/meets and is true for teaching as well. I became a Guardsman and I worked. Now, I am done! My next adventure is uncharted and unplanned, but I can't wait!

Thank you P-H-M for all you have done and will do for the Kummeth girls. Good luck to all!

James Langfeldt Teacher 27 Years of Service

Favorite P-H-M memory: In 1999, my students used a 4K\$ CAD software with P-H-M's fastest computer to design the senior prank which was to spell the letter "P" in the main parking lot with their cars. All of this planning was done in my lab without me knowing any of it was going on. Or at least that's how I remember it!

Words of advice: Seeing all three shifts of janitors in one work day is a long day, anything short of that is not.

What new adventure awaits you in retirement? Long bike rides with no regard for the time of day. A much less intensive "inbox."

Marcia Messer Teacher 14 Years of Service

What I liked most about working at P-H-M was the relationships I have built with my colleagues. April, Katrina, Amy and Candi ... you have been the best part of my career. I have made lifelong friendships with four of the most precious people on Earth and their sweet children as well.

The best advice I could give to my fellow colleagues is to live each year as if it is your last year of teaching. When I made the decision to retire, my perspective on everything changed drastically. I learned to appreciate everything within the confines of my classroom so much more, and to enjoy the kiddos on a whole different level.

My husband and I have been working the past eight years to develop our side business called Time for Tees. My next chapter is to continue to grow this business full time, so that he too, can retire! If you need custom tee shirts ...YOU KNOW WHERE TO GO!

Mary Nicolini Teacher 28 Years of Service

In late July 1994, I wasn't looking to leave my teaching position at Indianapolis Broad Ripple, but that all changed when I met Dr. Gene Sweeney, then principal of Penn High School. "We want to make writing the center of the curriculum," Sweeney said, and I began to wonder what it would be like to teach with a principal who was a true instructional leader, and who knew quite a bit about the writing process. I was hired to create a Writing Center, a place where teachers and I could collaborate and use technology to help student writers in all content areas. And for the next 25 years, that's exactly what I did. My colleagues and I explored rubrics and portfolios and ways to make thinking visible through writing.

In addition, I had the opportunity to work with Middle School teachers on a writing curriculum, and this too was fulfilling. In the summers, I worked with elementary teachers and art teachers in an academy focused on art making and writing. In all these ventures, I was able to blend my interests and skills with others who were as passionate as I was. When the Writing Center closed, I found a new home with the Early College Academy. Working with my colleagues there has been a perfect way to wrap up my career.

Central to all my work is this belief from Dan Kirby, that teaching writing is a task to approach with humility and with sensitivity to the feelings of another person. In fact, teaching anything requires this. I am grateful for my days in P-H-M, where I felt free to take risks and try new things to help students be the best thinkers and people they could be.

James Schmidt Teacher 27 Years of Service

I joined the Integrated Studies team at Penn in the fall of 1995, and quickly immersed myself with an interdisciplinary team of math, science, English and technology teachers. Under the guidance of division leader Don Monhaut and principal Gene Sweeney, we planned projects and took field trips while teaching all the content areas. Twenty-seven years later, I'm doing the same thing: working with an interdisciplinary team in the Early College Academy. And, with both programs, I found that working with a dedicated group of professionals, sharing the same students, is a recipe for success.

My best days at Penn were ones that were hands on and student centered. Early on, our team planned a complex in-school field trip that built on students' learning styles and multiple intelligences. Along the way, we mapped out compass courses, tested water quality in the St. Joseph River, and reenacted the Lewis and Clark expedition. Students were curious, and we found ways to channel their curiosity in educational, fun ways.

Whenever you name people, you invariably run the risk of leaving someone out, but I became a stronger teacher with each teacher I taught with. My colleagues in the PHMTA and ISTA taught me to stay strong and fight the good fight. For this I am grateful.

Mike Seger Administrator 19 Years of Service

Favorite P-H-M memory: The days are never the same! Working in a school environment and alongside a great group of people, regardless of employee groups, is a strength of Penn-Harris-Madison Schools. I have worked in two different school corporations over the years and will always hold P-H-M School employees in highest regards. Great people, great students and great community!

Words of advice: Be patient and understand you are working with children. The same holds true at times with parents!

During retirement, my wife Denise and I plan to reinvent our lives with each other. We have aspirations of staying healthy long enough to enjoy our retirement years. I hope to travel, fish, hunt, play golf, enjoy our family and spend time with our elderly parents in their later years.

Joseph Sierzputowski Teacher 13 Years of Service

I have enjoyed working with the many faculty members and administrators in my 13 years at Penn High School, especially the people associated with the Freshman Academy. I have developed many positive relationships with the faculty, my students, and the athletes that I have coached, and I will take many great memories with me.

We, as teachers, are role models for our students. I have had so many great moments with students over the years, but I still think back on some of the students that I wasn't able to reach. I realize that I have done my best, and I try to focus on the positives. I would encourage my colleagues to cherish all the great moments, and let the others go.

My wife and I are planning on moving to the Indianapolis area, and we will see what happens from there. I don't like to sit, so I will find something to keep me busy, whether it's working, coaching, golfing, or who knows what. We also plan to do some traveling, and we plan on spending lots of time with our granddaughter, and our adult children.

Shelly Sierzputowski Teacher 35 Years of Service

I was hired in P-H-M in 1987 and that was right when the corporation was growing immensely. My first school that I taught at had nearly 1,400 students and even with the growth and large size, P-H-M always felt like a large family. Throughout the years, our corporation continued to grow and yet for the longest time, everyone knew everyone and that large family stayed intact for nearly 30 years. I enjoyed being a part of the large family for the duration of my career.

Stay positive. With all things, there will be highs and lows throughout your career. Each year will have new challenges, but know that you are prepared to meet those challenges and work with your colleagues at overcoming any obstacles that stand in your way. The students are worth your time, efforts and dedication. They will benefit from your positive approach to life each and every day.

We plan to relocate to another city, travel to some places we have never visited, as well as visit some of our favorites. We also plan to spend a lot of time with family and friends; and having only one grandchild at this time, we also plan to spend a lot of time with her. I am looking forward to doing some reading, gardening, and golfing. I have always been interested in the law and would love to get involved with Indiana's Innocence Project.

Bob Wentroble Teacher 25 Years of Service

One of my favorite memories of working at P-H-M is the fact that I got to be one of the teacher's who opened Northpoint Elementary School with Janet Birch. My most favorite memory is that during my career here at P-H-M I enjoyed organizing and playing with the fourth and fifth grade students in the RFL (Recess Football League) at all the schools where I taught.

Some words of advice for my fellow colleagues would be to continue to have fun with your students. Make their learning day enjoyable for them and for yourself. Children are funny, so laugh as much as you can with them.

After retirement, I do plan to look for adventurous things to keep me busy. I still want to stay in touch with that educator part of my life. So, I may brave being a substitute teacher sometimes at P-H-M elementary schools. I still plan to coach seventh grade football. But, I also may look into starting an online business.

I plan to travel, especially to go back to Ireland. And, of course, try to live life stress free.

Trent Yeoman Teacher 35 Years of Service

There are so many things I have enjoyed while working for P-H-M. Being a Penn graduate, it was great to be able to work with several of my former teachers and coaches. Highlights would include winning State Championships in football, seeing my children and their future spouses graduate from Penn, and being able to coach football with my dad and brothers, and all of the other outstanding coaches at Penn. I will never forget the bonds created over the years with the wonderful staff, students, and players at Penn. I am always thrilled to hear from former students and players as they relate my impact on their lives.

My advice to colleagues is to be a team player while using your own personal style and talents. To help with your sanity, try to remember that no matter how bad things seem, you should try to find the positive side of the situation. As Coach Geesman would say as we saw a funeral procession driving by the practice field, "Things can always be worse."

Becky and I hope to have many years to spend time with our family and friends. We also hope to be able to travel (near and far). I will continue to enjoy coaching football, woodworking, building decks, reading, and brewing beer. Cheers!