



DATE: April 11, 2025
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FOR RELEASE: IMMEDIATE

Wendy Marshick and Kate Donnelly-Harris, named the 2025 Judy White-Ora “Teaching with Heart and Soul” award winners

Farmington, MI – On Wednesday, April 9, 2025, Diane Bauman, Director of School/Community Relations & Pupil Accounting, along with North Farmington High School (NFHS) staff, and friends and family, surprised Wendy Marshick with the Judy White-Ora “Teaching with Heart and Soul” award. The next day, a surprise visit was made to Kate Donnelly-Harris’s class with the Gill principal, staff, and Kate’s family to make the award presentation to Kate.

Wendy Marshick, North Farmington High School

Wendy currently works at North Farmington High School teaching special education. Her nomination states that she is an inspiration to all who work with her. She is dedicated to her students and to making North a place that is accepting to all. Her bond with her students is so strong that they continue to reach out to her even years after they have left the school system.

Wendy spends hours working with her kids to make sure that they are not only achieving at their highest potential, but that they feel safe and comfortable in school. She understands that students without connection will struggle with learning so connections to students is her priority.

Wendy is the go-to person for so many students at North. She is there for all students, not just the ones that she works directly with, but all students. Her room is a safe place for help, for comfort, and for a place to belong. She goes out of her way to make sure that students are seen and respected for who they are. She recognizes that teaching is more than math problems. It’s making sure that everyone is welcome, safe, and loved when they step into her school.

Kate Donnelly-Harris, Gill Elementary School

Kate is a teacher at Gill Elementary School with numerous years of teaching experience. Her nominators shared the following: Her passion and dedication to teaching is so inspiring. She teaches the curriculum while also teaching her students to be compassionate community members and successful problem solvers.

She is responsible for creating the “Kindness Club” with the “kindness kids.” This year, they won the State Keep Michigan Beautiful award for spreading kindness to others. One parent stated, “She loves each



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student and their family as if they were her own. Kate inspires her students to think outside of the box when it comes to putting others first and showing them kindness.”

Kate provides opportunities for each student to shine and to share their uniqueness. She works with what her students excel at and enjoys and helps them to use things they enjoy to work through the things that they don't enjoy. She maintains a teacher/student relationship but adds a level of mothering; the students are drawn to her and respect her greatly.

She ignites the joy of learning in her students by being passionate about learning herself. She always gives her best effort, tries new things, and talks about the joy of doing those things with her students.

The "Teaching with Heart and Soul" Award was created in honor of a former Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, Judy White-Ora, who passed away in 2006. Judy believed in investing in other people and relationships. During her years in education, she developed a pledge for teachers. Following her death, members of the Farmington Public Schools' community wanted to make sure the torch that Judy lit was passed onto the new generation of teachers, thus creating the "Teaching with Heart and Soul Award" for teachers that lead their lives by the words of the pledge. The pledge reads as follows:

Today I will:

- Respect the uniqueness of each child
- Ignite the joy of learning
- Listen to their voices
- Put human connections first
- Encourage the spirit and let their light shine
- Create a caring learning community

Wendy and Kate will be honored at the Farmington Public Schools' Board of Education meeting on Tuesday, April 22, 2025. The Board meeting will begin at 6 p.m. and be held at the Maxfield Education Center at 32789 W. Ten Mile Rd., Farmington. This meeting will also be streamed LIVE on TV-10's Youtube Channel. To learn more about Farmington Public Schools, visit www.farmington.k12.mi.us.