FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Fairfax County Special Education PTA (SEPTA) was pleased to host its sixth annual Awards Ceremony yesterday evening, Saturday, May 6, 2023.** Nearly 300 attendees gathered to celebrate the over 160 nominees for SEPTA’s awards. Dr. Michelle Reid, FCPS Superintendent, and FCPS School Board Chair Rachna Sizemore-Heizer gave welcoming remarks, thanking teachers and staff for their incredible work this year. SEPTA Vice President Lauren McCaughey and Advocacy Co-Chair Michelle Cades co-presented, as President Amanda Campbell was absent due to family illness.

The night was filled with laughter and tears as the friends, family, and colleagues of our nominees cheered, and the awardees were overcome with emotion. An especially poignant moment occurred when SEPTA presented the Mark Stewart Memorial Award for the first time. Mark Stewart was a Special Education teacher at Hunters Woods Elementary School, and he passed away on the first day of school this year. His family accepted a plaque in his honor and received a standing ovation from the crowd. SEPTA has renamed its Outstanding Special Education Teacher – Elementary category as the Mark Stewart Memorial Award: Outstanding Special Education Teacher – Elementary.

Thirty awards were presented in total. Please find attached a full list of winners, along with a list of all of our exceptional nominees. A few photos of the event are attached.

Attendees enjoyed ice cream from Jake’s Ice Cream and cookies from Cameron’s Coffee & Chocolates. Both Cameron’s and Jake’s are local shops in Fairfax and Falls Church, respectively, and both primarily employ adults with intellectual or cognitive disabilities. It was a wonderful event celebrating the special education community and the extraordinary impact of staff within Fairfax County Public Schools.

**2023 Fairfax County SEPTA Awards Winners:**

**PTA Reflections Awards:**

**★ Tessa Aguilar**, Visual Arts, Elementary School Age category

**★ David Caudillo,** Visual Arts, Special Artist category

**★** **Aviva Loggia,** Literature, High School Age category

**★ Madi Sauer,** Visual Arts, Middle School Age category

**Abbie Bachmore Memorial Award:** ★ **Kenneth Bennion,** Hunters Woods ES

**Outstanding Student:** ★ **Charles Nguyen,** Lake Braddock SS

**Community Champion:** ★ **Krystal Klem,** Melina's Dance Company

**Outstanding Inclusive Program:** ★ **Amy Makrigiorgos,** Cat B Program, James Madison HS

**Outstanding Administrator - Elementary:** ★ **Amy LaCrosse,** Rolling Valley ES

**Outstanding Administrator - Secondary:** ★ **Mandy Burke,** Chantilly HS

**Outstanding Support Staff: ★ Hy Au**, Terra Centre ES

**Outstanding Central Office Staff: ★ Monique Blunder,** PSL, West Springfield pyramid

**Outstanding Co-Curricular Staff:**  **★ Tara Williams,** Cooper MS ES

**Outstanding Co-Teaching Team: ★ Kathleen Piester,** Wolftrap ES **★ Catherine Rubin,** Wolftrap ES

**Outstanding General Education Teacher - Elementary:**

**★ Jill Moore,** Hunters Woods ES **★ Stella Samuels,** Rose Hill ES

**Outstanding General Education Teacher - Secondary: ★ Karen Fiala,** Chantilly H*S*

**Outstanding Related Services: ★ Sarah Espanol,** Marshall HS

**Outstanding Instructional Support Staff: ★ Marco Talotta,** Crossfield ES

**Outstanding Special Education Teacher - Preschool:**

**★ Brenda Scott,** Cardinal Forest ES **★ Denise Simms,** Eagle View ES

**Mark Stewart Memorial Award: Outstanding Special Education Teacher - Elementary:**

**★ Meredith Hulley,** Daniels RunES **★ Brooke Street,** Canterbury Woods ES

**Outstanding Special Education Teacher - Secondary:**

**★ Jean Counts,** James Madison HS **★ Edward Kelliher,** Justice HS

**Special Educator of the Year - Preschool: ★ Laure Grove,** Terra Centre ES

**Special Educator of the Year - Elementary:**  **★ Breanne Case,** Rose Hill ES

**Special Educator of the Year - Secondary: ★ Jennifer Auzenne,** Madison HS

**SuperHero Award - Margaret Behrns,** SEPTA Board member, Underserved Populations Chair

**2023 Fairfax County SEPTA Awards Nominees:**

**PTA Reflections Awards:**

**★ Tessa Aguilar**, Visual Arts, Elementary School Age category **★ David Caudillo,** Visual Arts, Special Artist category **★** **Aviva Loggia,** Literature, High School Age category **★ Madi Sauer,** Visual Arts, Middle School Age category

**Abbie Bachmore Memorial Award:**

★ **Kenneth Bennion,** Hunters Woods ES ★ **Juliana Torrico,** Rose Hill ES

**Outstanding Student:**

★ **Charles Nguyen,** Lake Braddock SS ★ **Joshua Sulpizio,** Woodley Hills ES

**Community Champion:**

**★ Lucy Beadnell,** Director of Advocacy, Arc of NOVA **★ Jason DellaValle,** Owner**,** [Adaptive Movement LLC](https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=a2ab4c6841ef27eaJmltdHM9MTY4MjcyNjQwMCZpZ3VpZD0zM2VhZmNiYS1jM2IwLTY5NTMtMGIyNi1lZGNkYzJlMjY4YjEmaW5zaWQ9NTIwOA&ptn=3&hsh=3&fclid=33eafcba-c3b0-6953-0b26-edcdc2e268b1&psq=adaptive+movement+llc&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cubGlua2VkaW4uY29tL2luL2FkYXB0aXZlbW92ZW1lbnQ&ntb=1) ★ **Krystal Klem,** Melina's Dance Company **★ Cung Tran,** Director, Elite Ma Centers

**Outstanding Inclusive Program:**

★ **Amy Makrigiorgos,** James Madison HS ★ **Mandy Walter,** Poplar Tree ES

**Outstanding Administrator - Elementary:**

**★ Megan Counts,** Laurel Ridge ES **★ Veronica DelBagno,** Rolling Valley ES **★ Laurie Dufour,** Cooper MS ★ **Rachel Edwards,** Rose Hill ES**★ Saundra Fitzgerald,** Hunters Woods ES★ **Amy LaCrosse,** Rolling Valley ES **★ Sean McCartney,** Hunters Woods ES **★ Catherine Wood,** Laurel Ridge ES

**Outstanding Administrator - Secondary:**

★ **Kristen Boehme,** Hayfield SS ★ **Mandy Burke,** Chantilly HS ★ **Kristen Fennel,** Chantilly HS

**Outstanding Support Staff:**

**★ Hy Au**, Terra Centre ES **★ Laurie Bennett,** Cooper MS **★ Charlotte Diorio,** Cooper MS

**★ Lisa Hodge,** Cooper MS **★ Aubrey Hopkins Midgley,** Cooper MS **★ Jasmin Huang,** Cooper MS

**★ Idalia Navarrete,** Woodley Hills ES

**Outstanding Central Office Staff:**

**★ Monique Blunder,** PSL, West Springfield pyramid

**Outstanding Co-Curricular Staff:**

**★ Mariama Balde-Diallo,** Laurel Ridge ES SACC **★ Ann Jopke,** Hollin Meadows **★ Maura Keaney,** Island Creek ES **★ Miranda****Lansburry,** Justice HS **★ Joann Paige,** Marshall Road ES **★ Pedro Reyes,** Rose Hill ES **★ Becky Smith,** Hollin Meadows ES **★ Tara Williams,** Cooper MS ES

**Outstanding Co-Teaching Team:**

**★ Kathleen Piester,** Wolftrap ES **★ Catherine Rubin,** Wolftrap ES

**Outstanding General Education Teacher - Elementary:**

**★ Brooke Allan,** Terra Centre ES **★ Samantha Anstett,** Rolling Valley ES **★ Areeba Azad-Zaman,** Bull Run ES **★ Tiffany Davidson,** Hollin Meadows ES **★ Abby Dobbins,** West Springfield ES **★ Keiko Endo,** Fox Mill ES **★ Anne Garvey,** Laurel Ridge ES **★ Jill Moore,** Hunters Woods ES **★ Jessie Na,** Fox Mill ES **★ Amy O’Dea,** Stratford Landing ES**★ Erin Quinn,** CanterburyWoods ES **★ Alexandria Resch,** Hollin Meadows ES **★ Paige Rucks,** Marshall Road ES **★ Stella Samuels,** Rose Hill ES

**★ Shanetta Sangster,** Fort Belvoir Upper ES **★ Lindsay Teran,** Wakefield forest ES **★ Paula Williams,** Terra Centre ES

**Outstanding General Education Teacher - Secondary:**

**★ Mersedeh Darvish,** Thoreau MS **★ Karen Fiala,** Chantilly H*S*

**Outstanding Related Services:**

**★ Katharine Altman,** Kent Garden ES **★ Paul Bordelon,** Union Mill ES and Little Run ES

**★ Sarah Espanol,** Marshall HS **★ Jennifer Min,** Cedar Lane S **★ Ahmed Safi,** South County Region

**★ Marianne Strickler,** Hunters Woods ES **★ Nick Thayer,** Chantilly HS **★ Jo Woodzell,** Canterbury Woods ES

**Outstanding Instructional Support Staff:**

**★ Rehana Afzal,** Hollin MeadowsES **★ Shahnaz Ali,** Hollin Meadows ES **★ Laura Alvarez,** Hollin Meadows ES**★ Flora Chavez,** Clermont ES- **★ Priscilla Chika,** Churchill Road ES **★ Leah Copeland,** Cooper MS **★ Kristy Gibson,** Rolling Valley ES **★ Johanna Grasso,** White Oaks ES**★ Amy Heuer,** Hayfield SS**★ Brendan Hogan,** Rolling Valley ES **★ Jamie Lee,** Cooper MS **★ Carol Long,** Bull Run ES**★ Bethany Lowery,** Terra Centre ES **★ Carla Maughlin,** Lemon Road ES **★ Rekha Mhasawade,** Bonnie Brae ES **★ Shahida Mughal,** Glen Forest ES **★ Shawna Peterson,** Rolling Valley ES

**★ Rangasri Potluri,** Rose Hill ES **★ Saba Rauf,** Rose Hill ES **★ Britney Reid,** Hollin Meadows ES

**★ Maria Rivera,** Waynewood ES**★ Adriana  Rosas,** Glen Forest ES **★ Marco Talotta,** Crossfield ES

**Outstanding Special Education Teacher - Preschool:**

**★ Karey Dennis,** Deer Park ES **★ Laure Grove,** Terra Centre ES **★ Theresa Jensen,** Eagle View ES

**★ Rachel Moll,** Glen Forest ES **★ Lori Murphy,** Colin Powell ES **★ Lisa Pilger,** Island Creek ES

**★ Brenda Scott,** Cardinal Forest ES **★ Miranda Sevier,** Island Creek ES **★ Denise Simms,** Eagle View ES

**Mark Stewart Memorial Award: Outstanding Special Education Teacher - Elementary:**

**★ Kirsten Birge,** Bull Run ES **★ Breanne Case,** Rose Hill ES **★ Sarah Connolly,** Olde Creek ES

**★ Robyne Davis,** Kent Garden ES **★ Joanne DeCerbo,** Wakefield Forest ES **★ Alexis Deibler,** Bonnie Brae ES **★ Becca DiBari,** Rose Hill ES **★ Bari Dooley,** Silverbrook ES **★ Synthia Fairley,** Fort Belvoir Upper ES **★ Erin Gaston,** London Towne ES **★ Kailah Gastrell,** Halley ES **★ Meredith Hulley,** Daniels RunES **★ Wendy Jaggers,** Laurel Ridge ES **★ Annie Joseph,** Kent Garden ES **★ Cathy Kim,** Rose Hill ES**★ Mary Kolodne,** Island Creek ES **★ Maggie Lowe,** Terra Centre ES **★ Sigalit Mizrahi,** Mantua ES

**★ Colleen O'Carroll,** Rolling Valley ES **★ Evelyn Ransom,** Hollin Meadows ES **★ Carol Ray,** Rolling Valley ES **★ Meghan Ritter,** Island Creek ES **★ Lauren Ryan,** Keene Mill ES **★ Justin Robinson,** Hollin Meadows ES**★ Kira Saiban,** Newington Forest ES **★ Erin Schillinger,** Homebound **★ Jessica Scott,** Lane ES **★ Joanne Shabelski,** Waynewood ES **★ Kara Smith,** Cardinal Forest ES **★ Brooke Street,** Canterbury Woods ES **★ Quyen Sullivan,** Hunters Woods ES **★ Laura Summitt,** Rolling Valley ES

**★ Linda Trossbach,** Cardinal Forest ES **★ Amy Wells,** Hollin Meadows ES **★ Bernice Wonderly,** White Oaks ES

**Outstanding Special Education Teacher - Secondary:**

**★ Jennifer Auzenne,** Madison HS **★ Jordan Black,** South County HS **★ Rebecca Burgos,** Hayfield SS

**★ Meghan Collins,** Hayfield SS **★ Jean Counts,** James Madison HS **★ Diane Garoni,** Cedar Lane S

**★ Judy Ann Gray,** Robinson SS **★ Audrey Hardwick**,Robinson SS**★ Edward Kelliher,** Justice HS

**★ Julie Landry,** Hayfield SS **★ Jenny Murphy,** Kilmer MS **★ Tami Negri,** Hughes MS **★ Amber O'Donnell,** South Lakes HS **★ Nia Ravenstahl,** South Lakes HS **★ Rich Sarhanis,** Chantilly HS

**Special Educators of the Year (chosen from all nominees)**

**SuperHero Award: (chosen from SEPTA Board Members)**