

## **Good Apple Award Winners 2016-2017**

**Erika Anderson** – nominated by Susan Michael

Erika Anderson has gone above and beyond her professional duties ever since taking on the co-chair position of the last high school NEASC evaluation. She has spent countless hours coordinating schedules, organizing materials, and processing information. She also served on the follow-up committee and the two year report committee. She has been the go-to person for three administrators. In addition to this, she is an excellent educator and friend.

**Robert Bajoros** – nominated by Ron Melnik

On November 18, 2015 Robb Bajoros appeared before the RSD13 Board of Education. At that time he presented to the Board of Education the work he had done with the new Unified Sports Program. The presentation was very thorough and heartfelt. I don't often use this term but his presentation was moving. He stated that he had coached athletics for 10+ years and this was the best experience he ever had.

Robb appeared before the Board of Education again on January 13, 2016 as part of Nick Barbieri's presentation on the state of athletics in RSD13. At this time Robb shared with the Board of Education just how much this program meant to the students involved. He defined the students involved as those in the Unified Sports and those involved in all other athletic programs. Robb has integrated the Unified Sports Program fully into the district with his hard work and complete conviction. If you want further proof, just look at the pictures of the students with pure joy on their faces.

One can only imagine how much time and effort go into starting a program from the ground up. It is my honor to nominate Robb for a Good Apple Award.

**Crystal Castro** – Katie Bodak and the Lyman Special Education Team

We would like to nominate Crystal Castro for a Good Apple Award. Crystal's support is easy to go unnoticed, as she does it so seamlessly. I think to really appreciate it, you have to have experienced what it is like without her, and we have. Each and every meeting we go to, we do not have to worry that a form will not be in the folder, she has already taken care of that. When we need an invitation sent out, all we need to do is email that information and she will take care of it... and if we forget to invite someone... she notices! She is a wonderful resource whenever you have a question about IEP regulations, and if she does not know off-hand, she knows right where to look. She doesn't only tell us what needs to be done or do it for us, she teaches us along the way. In the insanity of the season, she is always willing to organize the paperwork and send it home. She has been a true lifesaver! Everyone needs a little "fairy", as I call her, to keep us all on the right side of the paperwork tracks. Unfortunately, we are so sorry that she will no longer

be our “fairy” as she will be moving on to bigger and better duties, to a place she is no doubt needed. We know she will be still be there to answer our questions and guide us in the right direction, but we didn’t want her to leave before we got to recognize her for all that she has done. It may seem minimal, but oh it was so, so much more. Thank you Crystal Castro, you have been a lifesaver!

**Community Round-Up Planning Committee** – nominated by Kathy Bottini, Melissa Cook and Becca Sinusas

Wilda Castro  
Bronwyn Commins  
Kathleen Davidson  
Anne Doyle  
Samantha Grayeck  
Greg Morrone  
Bridgette Schlicker  
Lynn Schofield  
Carole Sibiskie  
Sean Regan  
Sharon Rogers

The Community Round-Up celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> year this past December. This annual food drive would not be possible without the hundreds of volunteers from our schools and community. We would like to recognize one group in particular for their dedication and commitment to this event; they spend many hours in the months before the Round-Up planning, advertising, recruiting students and coordinating this amazing day. Their generosity, kindness and energy are unparalleled. They have been with us from the start and we could not do it without them.

**Rich Fielding** – nominated by Bryden Whiting

Rich Fielding is a hard working individual who is dedicated to his position here at District 13. Rich leads by example and continually displays excellent communication and professionalism. He is a good teacher, a great boss and an even better role model. He is usually busy working on something important, yet he always finds the time to assist myself and others with their immediate problem. Because of this, I nominate Rich Fielding for the Good Apple Award.

**Christie Fournier** – nominated by Katie Bodak

I would like to nominate Christie Fournier for a Good Apple Award. Christie has been an invaluable member of my team this year. Her firm, yet caring demeanor always let the students know that not only does she care about the whole child, but she will follow through with her expectations to help each student grow. And more importantly, she will help them not only grow as a learner, but as a good person as well. She had high, yet appropriate expectations for each

individual she was asked to work with and consistently worked tirelessly to ensure that she was doing right by each student. Furthermore, she was always listening to her team members and was not afraid to make suggestions on behalf of the team. Her honesty was always appreciated and represented the type of team that I want to be a part of. I appreciate her honesty and her openness to not only try to do what I am expecting, but to help me grow as a leader through questioning and conversations about best practices as well. Christie is another assistant who will not be with me due to budget cuts this year and that is a true loss for the district. She lives and upholds the Core Ethical Values at all times and I was so very lucky to work alongside such a dedicated and supporting team member. She will be greatly missed.

**Susan Francis** – nominated by Katie Bodak

I would like to nominate Susan Francis for a Good Apple Award. This was my first year as a teacher at Lyman and her first year as an assistant. Her support in a caring and kind way each and every day made a challenging year a little easier to get through. Her desire to individualize for each child I asked her to work with and her ability to adapt as requested by me and as necessary for each student I asked her to work with was superb. Susan taught for many years in the classroom and yet she continues to search for best strategies to support individual learners and never made me feel like I was the new one. Her support was unwavering and so very appreciated. I truly believe that without Susan by my side this year I could not have experienced the successes I did. My only sadness is that she will not be with me next year and that is a true loss for the district. She is truly a valuable team player, that challenges students to their limits while also meeting them where they are “beyond the academics” at the same time. Her kindness and compassion for the whole child as well as the whole team is invaluable. I was so lucky to have her with me even if only for a short time. Her support will be missed greatly.

**Alex Huffman** – nominated by Ann Mallin

I would like to nominate Alex Huffman for a Good Apple Award. Alex began her career at the MTA as a job coach. She has an excellent rapport and relates well to students with mild, moderate and significant disabilities. Alex has an excellent understanding of each student's disability and is able to teach the student by modifying specific tasks so that the student can be successful at the work site.

After being a job coach for a few years, Alex became the full time vocational coordinator at the MTA. This is a challenging and time consuming job and Alex performs it exceptionally well. She is responsible for placing 28 students at job sites on campus or in the community, organizes and rotates the job coach schedules for every student, writes comprehensive vocational reports, attends all student PPTs and has ongoing communication with parents throughout the year. In addition to all this Alex continues to expand job sites on campus and in the community for all of the students.

Alex works quietly and effectively and always places students at appropriate job sites. She has a good relationship with students, parents, teachers and co-workers. Alex is a talented and committed educator and is truly a Good Apple who is well deserving of this award.

**Amy Verre** – nominated by Ann Mallin

I would like to nominate Amy Verre for a Good Apple Award. Amy joined the MTA ten years ago as one of the program's first job coaches. She has worked well with all of the students at their respective job sites; many have very challenging behaviors. Her calm and easy going manner is instrumental in having students meet success at job sites. As the program expanded from two students to over 20 students, Amy assumed the role of assisting the classroom teacher and also taking care of all the clerical duties involved in running the program. Amy is conscientious, detailed and flexible in her approach to students in the classroom and in completing all of the clerical duties needed to make the program run smoothly. She organizes the van schedule every day and reorganizes everything if there are staff absences. She updates parents on MTA events, dances, lunches and community outings. She plans and organizes the annual MTA graduation. For the past few years, she has come in on a Sunday to set up the tables and centerpieces for the graduation. She does this quietly and effectively and never complains. The MTA program would not run as smoothly as it does without Amy's constant effort, commitment and support.

Amy is well deserving of a Good Apple Award. She is an excellent employee, co-worker, assistant in the classroom, job coach and administrative assistant. It has been a pleasure having Amy at the MTA.

**Sam Grayeck** – nominated by Ann Mallin

I would like to nominate Samantha (Sam) Grayeck for a Good Apple Award. Sam has worked as a speech/language pathologist at the Middlesex Transition Academy for the past two years. In addition to working in the classroom, Sam has volunteered to organize various social activities for the students at the Academy and students at Wesleyan University. This year she organized and hosted a parent and student evening at the First and Last Tavern which was a tremendous success. She has helped organize and chaperone dances on campus, lunch dates, and community outings for the students at the MTA. Everyone appreciates the time Sam dedicates to the social component of the MTA program.

Sam has been a tremendous help to teachers at various meetings with parents. She presents an excellent perspective to parents in terms of specific goals and objectives that their son/daughter is working on within the program. Sam volunteered to help market the MTA program by reaching out to social media sites including Facebook, to showcase the various activities in which the MTA students are involved. Her technological skills are a tremendous asset to our program at the MTA. Sam is organized, has excellent time management skills and also has the ability to motivate students both in the classroom and in the community. Sam makes the

students feel safe, happy and productive in their instructional time with her. She always has a positive attitude.

Sam is an excellent teacher and is truly deserving of the Good Apple Award.

**Bill Kurtz** – nominated by the Strong School Purple Team

Some teachers are a little twisted  
Some are straight as a rod  
Some have added sweetness  
Some are funny or odd

We have a teacher at Strong School  
that creates a different kind of vibe  
He invokes a spark and is also so cool  
He has become a vital part of our tribe

He codes, he creates  
He inspires, he collaborates  
He listens, he motivates  
He jokes, he's just GREAT

Bill is a teacher that is the salt of the earth  
And the many flavors of life he brings  
He shows the students what they are worth  
And lets their voices sing

So simply said:  
Roses are red  
Violets are blue  
You are an AMAZING teacher  
And inspiring too

**Ann Majewicz** – nominated by Memorial School Faculty and Staff

We would like to nominate this year's Good Apple Award to a woman who is an integral part of our school. She is a woman who wears many hats. From nurse to library aid to magazine queen, copy machine whisperer, office helper and the snack rapper, Mrs. Majewicz has the work ethic that supports all of us. When any of us need coverage she helps without complaint. She is the only one we know who can get a roomful of students to sit quietly with a blink of an eye. Over the years she has certainly seen many changes in our schools, but she remains loyal and confident. In her quiet way she is a champion to students as she slips them treats, reads stories, and takes time to listen to whoever needs it. So this year we would like to thank Annie

Majewicz, our longest working district paraprofessional, by nominating her for the Good Apple Award.

**Kate McLaughlin** – nominated by the Lyman 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Team

Kate McLaughlin is a very good apple. She always has a warm welcome for everyone entering John Lyman School. No matter how chaotic things might be in the office that day, she still takes a moment to share her bright smile and a thoughtful greeting. The phone and buzzer consistently ring as she kindly lets parents, students, visitors, and forgetful staff into the building. Kate wears many hats, and is willing to take on a wide variety of tasks to make things run smoothly. On any given day you can find Kate busily completing a variety of office tasks, working one on one with students, or providing assistance in the building. Every kindergartener happily begins their time at John Lyman School with a visit with Mrs. McLaughlin. Even though her day is beyond full with tasks to complete, she will drop everything to help a student, make a copy, or retrieve a paper from the machine to save a teacher's day. Kate is always amazingly helpful, freely shares compliments to brighten your day, and has a good ear to listen when things are challenging. Kate goes above and beyond working well beyond her scheduled hours to make certain things will run smoothly for everyone the next day. John Lyman School would not be the same without her, and the teachers are very grateful for Kate!

**Barbara Perigny** – nominated by District 13 Secretaries and Transportation Coordinator

She is the best! What I love about Barbara is that she will ALWAYS stop what she is doing, get right on the problem or issue and will never leave you hanging. She handles it right then and there with ALL she has to do. There is no doubt she puts the kids' safety first! – Pam MacDuff

Barbara Perigny has always gone above and beyond to make sure bus transportation runs smoothly. Whenever I call her with last minute changes or bus issues she is always willing to go the extra mile to rectify the situation or help accommodate Memorial School's needs! Both Regional District 13 and DATTCO are so fortunate to have her! – Lynn Davis

Barbara maintains a calm, friendly and professional approach even when a frantic parent thinks their child was "lost on the way home". She is able to reassure the parent and us that the child is safe and will be home shortly. She is truly appreciated and an asset to our district. – Eileen Chupron

Barbara is an incredible asset to both District 13 and DATTCO. Her willingness to help both the office staff and parents is nothing short of extraordinary. During our most busy time of the day Barbara communicates between all of the elementary schools, parents and drivers with incredible efficiency. We appreciate Barbara very much. – Darlene Allen

Barbara is not only our colleague she is also our friend. She is always ready to do what is best for kids to keep them safe. Barbara has seen many of us at our worst when we have a parent on the phone line, a teacher on the other, and the bus company on the third, while we try to coordinate getting a child home safely. She knows each route and communicates her concerns about safety to parents and the district. She comes to kindergarten orientation every year and calms new

parents about their transportation anxiety. I know I can always count on her because she goes above and beyond to do the right thing for kids. – Patti Checko

Barbara is always there for me when I have a question or bus issue. She is always cool, calm and collected no matter what the issue is. If she doesn't know the answer right away, she goes out of her way to get the information for you. I have the utmost respect for what her job entails and how well she handles it. – Pat Toth

Barbara and I work so well together. I can always trust that our students' safety is her greatest concern. She spends many exceptionally long days working at the depot and will not leave until every student is safely home. She knows our streets, our towns, our kids and our concerns. I couldn't do my job without her support and guidance. She is a true friend to District 13 and most deserving of a Good Apple Award. – Sue Gaudreau

**Pat Toth** – nominated by the Strong School Purple Team

A secretary sets the tone for efficiency and climate in any school. We are blessed with one who is not only a consummate professional but also unfailingly kind and patient. She juggles spreadsheets and calendars with more moving parts than an internal combustion engine and yet never fails to put the task down and greet us with a gentle smile when we interrupt her for a form that we were doubtlessly sent at some point but have misplaced. She remembers the names and histories of our children, grandchildren, aging parents, and beloved pets. She maneuvers emergency planning for our classes when we are taken ill during the day and helps send secret emails out to staff to announce surprise showers and celebrations. She is our command central but also our heart. These and many other reasons are why Pat Toth is the core of Strong Middle School and our Good Apple.

**Jane Schmitt** – nominated by Mark Basil

Jane has been the high school food service manager for the past fourteen years and I have had the great fortune to have spent the last eight years with her as the food service director. Jane has accepted my perspective and viewpoints on the food service operations with open arms and great support while offering her years of experience and knowledge to help grow and improve the cafeteria experience. We have found a great comfort in each other and I trust her opinion and value her dedication that she gives to her job and this district. All of the hard work that she and her staff up into their jobs was recognized by the students and parents in the Niche nationwide survey that ranked them #3 in Connecticut and #92 in the country for their quality of service.

One of the most challenging parts of running a successful operation is your ability to lead and work with others. She has those skill sets to get the most out of her associates. She also has that personal quality about her that people enjoy interacting with. She expresses a genuine concern for people, always trying to assist in any way to help. That is something that Jane has always brought to RSD 13, her charming personality and love for life. Her bright smile and her glass shattering joy of laughter that echoes throughout the school. You cannot help but to join in on the laughter and smiles.

Jane exemplifies everything that this honor bestows.

**Tammy Stewart** – nominated by Jason Korn

Few shape to goodness like Tammy Stewart. Tammy understands implicitly the imperative of patience in the classroom. She holds fast to what is good, what is fair. She is compassionate, cheerful, kind, and scatters loose-leaf those selfsame qualities abroad. Her values abide afresh in her students.