

THOMPSON SCHOOL DISTRICT



JENNY SPARKS / Loveland Reporter-Herald

Thompson School District Nurse Barb Hartman, center, reacts as she finds out Monday she won the Thompson Education Foundation Educator of the Year Award at the district offices in Loveland. Her supervisor, Charlie Carter, left, and Kim Akeley-Charron with the education foundation, right, watch her reaction.

Barb Hartman named Educator of the Year

Thompson Education Foundation honors 6 educators

BY PAMELA JOHNSON
LOVELAND REPORTER-HERALD

Thompson School District nurse Barb Hartman was named the Thompson Education Foundation's overall Educator of the Year.

"This always goes to someone who goes above and beyond," Kim Akeley-Charron, executive director of the foundation, said when telling Hartman of her honor. "You've done that every single day through every year you've worked at the Thompson School District, but let's be honest, this year is more."

Hartman, who has worked for more than two decades to make sure all students' health needs are met, was faced with extra health

challenges this year during the COVID-19 pandemic. She was nominated by 14 different people as Educator of the Year because of the way she has stepped up to help.

Every year the Thompson Education Foundation names educators of the year across four different categories, and then chooses one overall award winner from all of those nominations. This year 79 educators were nominated, some more than once, for the honors.

Typically, the winners are announced during a live event. But because of the pandemic, the reveal was changed to an online event, so while the announcement was a surprise to the many educators and community members

watching, the winners knew in advance and recorded segments that were aired Thursday during the online Trailblazing Thompson event.

"Each of these 79 educators should be celebrated for the work they do and the spirit they bring to the district," Akeley-Charron said Thursday.

In addition to Hartman, five others were honored by the Thompson Education Foundation:

- Karen Shumate, a second-grade teacher at Mary Blair Elementary School as elementary educator of the year.
- Ericka Griess, exceptional student services teacher at Mountain View High School as secondary educator of the year.

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- Jordan Jennings, counselor and athletic coach at Berthoud High School as staff member of the year, an award for any employee who isn't assigned as a teacher or principal.

- Deon Davis, principal of Coyote Ridge Elementary School, and Ian Stout, executive director of Loveland Classical Schools, both as principal of the year in what Akeley-Charron said was a competitive category.

Hartman learned of her honor Monday when Akeley-Charron surprised her with a camera crew. The district nurse thought she was going to a meeting with parents, but was instead given her award and sworn to secrecy until after the big reveal during Trailblazing Thompson on Thursday.

"I am surprised," said Hartman, who was presented with an award, a \$200 gift card and a two-year vehicle lease from King Buick GMC. "It's an incredible honor, and just an overwhelming honor ... I'm not in this alone. Everybody has worked so hard during this pandemic."

Hartman worked as a hospital nurse for 15 years before starting out as a school nurse in the Thompson School District 22 years ago. She has been the overall district nurse for 15 years.

"We take care of our kids," she said when asked to describe the job of a nurse within the district. "We use our medical knowledge to help students with health concerns access their education."

Among the 14 nominations for Hartman, her colleagues described how she has worked tirelessly to ensure schools were safe for students to return amid the pandemic, that she creates a system of support to maintain the physical, mental and social health of students, and that all schools within the district have benefited from Hartman's leadership throughout her tenure.

The nominations highlighted long hours Hartman has devoted to staying on top of a changing pandemic, leading and supporting the district, including training on PPE and precautions and helping with contact tracing when there were positive cases at different schools. She maintained a positive attitude and kept other staff members motivated, according to the nominations.

One nomination read: "2020 is the Year of the Nurse, and Barb has gone above and beyond her duties this year as the Health Services Coordinator. Barb has worked

extremely hard to ensure a safe return to in-person learning environment throughout the district. ... She has been a role model of continued education on a topic nobody is an expert on, and she has demonstrated flexibility by maneuvering the weekly changes the Health Department gives the district.

"Barb is an outstanding example of what it means to be a dedicated educator in a year of so many unknowns."

Also honored were:

Shumate as elementary educator of the year, who was described in her nominations by a parent as "a beloved and oft-referenced figure in our household, and in a year where so much distance is required, that type of closeness is a testament to a phenomenal teacher." Her nominations mentioned that she delivered assignments, books and activities to students who were at home during quarantines and described her as "kind, caring, compassionate and sincere."

Griess as secondary educator of the year, a teacher who "inspires hope in students," creates a collaborative team with students, staff and families and consistently fosters academic, behavioral and emotional

growth in students, according to her nominations read by Akeley-Charron during the event. The nomination also states that "parents know they can count on (Griess) to help them and their students unconditionally."

Jennings as staff member of the year, who as a counselor and coach was described in his nomination as "a perfect example of kindness, humility and encouragement" and "a true example of EXCELLENCE."

Davis, at Coyote Ridge, was described in nominations as a principal who "communicates with students and staff through humor, strength of character, vision and strong leadership" and is dedicated to students and staff "150%." During winter break, he drove to each staff member's home and placed in their yard a sign that says "An amazing educator lives here."

Stout, who leads Loveland Classical Schools, was described in his nomination as "a great networker and mentor" and an amazing leader who "proactively led our school to thrive in 2020 despite the pandemic."

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