

Rome City Schools Names Teacher and Support Staff of the Year



After being nominated by their peers, completing a lengthy application process and being evaluated by educators outside of the system, Rome City Schools has officially announced the Support Staff of the Year, and the runner-up and winner of the Teacher of the Year for Rome City Schools.

Taking home the honor for Support Staff of the Year was Dr. Scott McClure, a paraprofessional for Elm Street Elementary. "I've experienced a lot of great moments in my life and this one is near the top," said Dr. McClure after thanking his family and co-workers. "I am honored and I will not take this award lightly."



Runner-up for Teacher of the Year, Hillary Oliver, teaches first grade at West End, and after she had thanked everyone who works with her she sent a heartfelt message to her family. "My husband and I chose Rome because of the education we provide to our students. So, just being a part of a school system like Rome City is an honor. I tell my family all the time that I am so blessed to have them and I thank them for being a part of my rock star life."

And finally, after a dinner provided by Rome Middle School, it was time for the announcement of Teacher of the Year. Becky Kemnitz was named Teacher of the Year for the 2018-2019 school year. Kemnitz teaches third grade at Anna K. Davie and she is also a tennis coach at Rome High School. However, to most who know her, she is so much more.

As her eyes welled with tears at the podium, she gave the audience the source of her motivation. "I became a teacher to change kids, but being a teacher has changed me," she said.

Kemnitz went on to tell the story of a chance meeting with a former student while ordering food. She said that the young lady in the drive-thru remembered having her as a teacher. The little girl, handing food through the window, was now an adult and she wanted to let Kemnitz how much she appreciated the time spent working to change the lives of kids.

Each school in the system nominated a representative from their staff and the winners were chosen from this pool. Buffi Murphy, Professional Learning Specialist for Rome City Schools, said that Rome City Schools wishes to honor all who go above and beyond to educate their students.

"The State of Georgia recognizes our teacher of the year, but they do not offer an award for support staff. However, in Rome City Schools we want to recognize everyone who plays an important role in the education of our students," said Murphy. "So we created an award for Support Staff of the Year to show them how much we appreciate their service to our children.

"After being recognized as a leader in their schools the applicants must complete a 15-20 page document that is scored using a rubric developed by our state Department of Education," Murphy continued. "All of these candidates have had to demonstrate what it means to be a true leader, a mentor and provide a high level of service to our students."

Educators and support staff nominated were given an award and a gift basket provided by Rome City Schools' community partners.

Faith Collins, Rome City Schools Board Chair, said that she was extremely proud of all of the nominees and the winners were all deserving of the honor. "It was so hard before we announced the winners to not congratulate them because our Superintendent informed us on Friday of who the winners would be," Collins said. "I consider Dr. McClure a friend and I have watched him identify students at Elm Street who may need some help. He is a really special part of our school system. Mrs. Oliver at West End and Mrs. Kemnitz at Anna K. Davie are also wonderful. I have seen the great things they all do for our children and we are so glad that they found us. We are fortunate to have them share their unique talents with our system and we want to congratulate them for all of their hard work. You can tell from the emotions we have seen from them all tonight that they are passionate about what they do. They all reach our children in a way that far exceeds the walls of a classroom and that is what we want in our educators."

Superintendent Louis Byars echoed Collins' statements. "It is an unbelievable honor to work with tonight's winners, and our entire faculty here in Rome City Schools. As you can see tonight, they have a passion for what they do and that is why they were selected by the committee to be the Support Staff and Teacher of the Year. We have so many people, who deserve to be recognized, but these teachers are really special and we are glad to let them know how proud we are of them."

"We are fortunate to have Mrs. Kemnitz," said Dr. Clifton Nicholson who serves as principal at Anna K. Davie and works closely with the newly-named Teacher of the Year. "She has the biggest heart and some of the challenges she is faced with, day in and day out, do not stop her from working hard to reach her students. I have never seen a teacher like her in the 17 years I have been in education, and I have work in a few schools. Besides being a master at her craft, she is almost spiritual in the way she connects with kids. It is a tremendous thing to see in action. She is not only building a positive educational environment in our school, but she is also providing an example of how to build relationships with kids. That is so important and we are so proud and honored to work with her."