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TRINE SALUTES OUR 2021 EDUCATION AWARD WINNERS

We are proud of your
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the investment you make
in Trine University students.



Bradley Martin
Social Sciences



Linda Conley
Innovation in Teaching



Emilio Vazquez
Lifetime Achievement



Timothy Jenkins
STEM Subjects

Conley recognized for innovation in teaching

BY CHRISTY HARRIS

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For the last six years, Linda Conley has taught students at the Ketner School of Business at Trine University as an Assistant Professor.

Having earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, with a major in Human Resources and a Master in Organization Development from Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio, Conley brought with her the most important aspect of teaching, real world experience.

It was for the integration of such experiences into her classroom teachings at Trine University that Conley was awarded KPC Media's 2021 Innovation in Teaching award.

"Human Resource Management and Quality Management classes interact with a variety of professionals throughout the semester," Conley said. "Guest speakers discuss current classroom topics and relate it to their experiences (and) Year-end professional panels provide the students with an opportunity to see how the academic topics relate to how professionals manage on a daily basis."

Providing the classroom with more extensive real world integration, Conley said is the capstone course, a class in which she co-teaches with Gregg Shull, a business adjunct instructor at Trine University.

"With the assistance of Trine's Innovation 1, other professors and Trine stakeholders, we secure real world projects for clients. Students work as consultants on these projects and present recommended solutions in the form of Business and Marketing Plans or other forms of project reports," said Conley. "With the support of other faculty as technical mentors, we help students tackle projects that integrate

multiple disciplines and utilize critical thinking, problem solving and quantitative reasoning to formulate their recommendations."

Her interest in human resources and organization development came while studying at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio. Earning a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with a major in Human Resources and later a Master's degree in Organization Development, Conley expanded her interest to the "strategic focus required in HR and Strategic Management in an organization."

For her comprehension in and implementation of strategic human resources management, Conley earned two professional certificates in the field of HR: Senior Certified Professional from the Society for Human Resource Management and a Senior Professional in Human Resources, the senior-most certification for strategic mastery of HR.

Before earning her current teaching title and even further before she was an instructor or adjunct instructor for Trine University, Cazenovia College where she taught for more than 3-years, or her brief stint as an adjunct instructor at Indiana Tech, Conley headed the human resources departments for three companies with some of the highest employment rates in the United States.

Conley kick started her career as HR Manager for Fort James Corporation, the United State's largest manufacturer of commercial tissue prior to its acquisition in 2000; Guardian Industries Corporation, an employer of more than 18,000 people and prior to teaching full time, the largest home improvement retailer in the United States, Home Depot.

"Being a part of the management team in an organization exposed me to

the different disciplines that are needed to make an organization successful," said Conley. "I really enjoy teaching the disciplines of human resources, organization behavior, quality management and strategic management."

Conley said one of her loves of teaching comes from the fact that each of those topics are important in the world of business regardless of a person's position and that each provides an equally exciting and dynamic introduction to students.

"I started out teaching part-time and was immediately attracted to the academic environment. Working with the students and watching them mature from class to class is very rewarding," she said. "Having wonderful colleagues who enjoy what they do is a great benefit of working at Trine and in the Ketner School of Business. It is great to work in a profession that values life long learning."

Although staying current on technology and interactive applications to enhance the classroom are both challenging parts of maintaining her innovation in teaching, Conley said, educating students has been both a rewarding and spectacular career.

"It is very rewarding working with students every day, supporting them to reach their goals," said Conley. "The best is when they come back and support the Ketner School of Business in programing and mentoring current students."

"One piece of advice I would give (to anyone interested in teaching) is that you need to be flexible. There are a lot of changes that occur at institutions, within individual disciplines and with the sociocultural environment," she added. "Always watch for those changes and be willing to adapt. A second piece of advice is to understand that every student



is experiencing a lot more out of the classroom than we know. Being empathetic and supportive is important."

While not in the classroom, Conley prefers to place her focus on family.

"I enjoy volunteering to help with my daughter's activities and serve on the local swim team board," she said. "My family loves watching movies, cooking, traveling and reading."

Conley also volunteers for Junior Achievement, having delivered programing at Angola High School and Angola Elementary School; has served on various committees and assisted with fundraising efforts at her church, Holy Family Episcopal Church in Angola and assists with organizing an annual conference for fellow members and local HR professionals through her membership with the Northeast Indiana Human Resources Association Conference Committee.



Congratulations

Kindergarten teacher sees eagerness to learn

BY JEFF JONES

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Every day is a new adventure.

Amanda Ference knows that first hand as a kindergarten teacher at Carlin Park Elementary School in Angola.

Ference was recently recognized by KPC Media Group and the Fort Wayne Business Weekly for her work in early childhood.

"I teach kindergarten. I love the little ones," Ference said. "They are eager to learn and have so much love for people. Plus, I get to see them grow so much in a year."

When asked what has been the most rewarding part of her career, Ference said, "The

smiles and hugs from my students I am teaching or have already taught."

As any educator will tell you, not every day is sunshine and rainbows. Some days can be especially tough.

Ference said watching her students go through tough things in life has been the most challenging part of her teaching career.

The rewards outweigh the challenges, however.

When asked to share about an interaction with a student that she will never forget, Ference said, "I had the blessing to work with a student for two years. He had some tough behavior problems.

"We worked hard every day to help him. He and I really bonded now," she continued. "I see him outside the school and he always hugs me."

Outside of school, Ference is not involved in any community groups. "When I go home, I want to spend a lot of time with my own children," she explained.

She recommends reading "5 Love Languages of Children" by Gary Chapman.

For new teachers or individuals considering education as a career, Ference offered this advice: "It is the most challenging and rewarding job," she said. "Never give up and know that even on tough days, you are making a difference."



Trine professor teaches through practical application

BY DAVE KURTZ

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ANGOLA — A focus on how to keep students engaged and a passion for teaching make Timothy Jenkins, Ph.D., one of KPC Media Group's outstanding educators for 2021.

An associate professor, Jenkins teaches in the Design Engineering Technology program at Trine University.

Jenkins said he always is looking for ways to make his classes more meaningful for students.

"What's an example that I can talk to a student about that they might understand?" he asks himself.

In a project this fall, his students are designing cases for their own smartphones and creating them on 3D printers.

"The epitome of what we do in our program for our students is we give them that practical application opportunity," Jenkins said.

"How can we meet the learning objectives of the class and give the students something practical to work on, as opposed to just doing a homework assignment and writing a small paper?" he added.

This spring, Jenkins served as faculty advisor for a team of Trine University design engineering majors who won a major award in the NASA Human Exploration Rover Challenge.

The Trine team received the Task Challenge Award for the best 3D-printed tool design that could be used by lunar and Martian rovers to retrieve samples. It marked the second consecutive award for Trine.

A native of Hastings, Michigan, Jenkins holds bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in mechanical engineering and a Master of Business Administration degree, all from Michigan Technological University in the state's Upper Peninsula.

Six years as a maintenance officer in the



DAVE KURTZ

Timothy Jenkins, Ph.D., associate professor of design engineering technology at Trine University, shows one of the machines in a lab at the Bock Center for Innovation and Biomedical Engineering, where he teaches.

U.S. Army and career in private industry followed his bachelor's degree, before he returned to Michigan Tech in 2004 to earn his advance degrees.

During his graduate studies, he discovered, "I had more passion for the classroom than I had for doing research," Jenkins said. When he applied for jobs, "I specifically looked for schools where teaching is the focus."

Jenkins now is beginning his 10th academic year at Trine, the only school where he has taught.

"I've thoroughly enjoyed working here. I'm part of a great department and team," he said.

"I love teaching the students. It's excellent watching them grow as individuals and find their passions and go out into the work force and make names for



themselves in their chosen career paths," he added.

Trine engineering graduates with bachelor's degrees achieve a very high employment rate, he said. They find jobs as manufacturing supervisors, quality engineers and manufacturing engineers with medical device companies such as Zimmer Biomet and in the vehicle and recreational vehicle industries.

Jenkins' love of teaching extends beyond his classroom in the Bock Center for Innovation and Biomedical Engineering to his lifelong involvement with the Boy Scouts of America. Over his nearly 50 years in Scouting, he achieved Eagle rank and today serves as an adviser for the Order of the Arrow Honor Society and on the board of the local Anthony Wayne Council.

Klee wins educational award as music teacher

BY KARAH WILSON

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Music has always been a part of Kevin Klee's life, but it was a mix of influences that inspired him to begin teaching the subject.

"My mother taught kindergarten for over thirty years for Fort Wayne Community Schools," Klee said. "Invariably, when we were out in the community, she would meet a former student or parent. It was obvious from the conversations that my mom and the classroom she had created made a difference in their lives."

He went to college at Ball State University where he majored in music education. His mother went to BSU to study music education as well.

Klee began his teaching career at Monroe Central Junior/Senior High School where he taught for two years. He then moved to Northrop High School where he spent five years teaching before spending his last 33 years teaching at Snider High School. Klee retired in May after 40 years of teaching.

Klee said he was blessed with "some of the best" teachers in elementary school, junior high and high school.

"Teachers were literally the coolest people I knew," he said. "I had wonderful music teachers in elementary school and junior high, but my life literally changed because of my high school band directors and orchestra director. The opportunities that were provided for me through jazz band and marching band made me feel like I was part of something special, a family of passionate music-makers."

Klee said the most rewarding part of his career has been watching students that may not have had a lot of natural talent become amazing musicians and people.

"In marching band, some kids take to movement like ducks to water," he

said. "Many students start out as 'ugly ducklings,' but when they figure it out, they blossom into beautiful 'swans.' Sometimes you have students that really aren't very good at playing their instruments, but they will fall in love with jazz. Somehow playing jazz taps into their previously hidden talents, and suddenly, they become superstars."

Klee said he has seen many instances where a love for music and the feeling of belonging in a musical ensemble helps students overcome any obstacle that stands in their way.

"I had a young man that was a special needs student," Klee said. "He was very quiet and shy, but he really loved band, especially marching band. He literally never missed rehearsal. He wanted to play in the drum line, but he had difficulty reading music. Sometimes we have had great success putting similar students in the pit section. One day in rehearsal, I look over, and he is playing this complicated passage perfectly. My brain tells me that he should not be able to play this, but my ears were telling me that he was, in fact, playing it. This student continued to make progress and eventually played bass drum in the drum line."

Throughout Klee's 40 years as an educator, his most challenging part of his career was in 2020.

"Teaching this past year through the pandemic was definitely the hardest thing I have ever done," he said. "Making music is a communal activity. The communication skills require such finesse that it is almost impossible to do it over Zoom. It's like trying to type while wearing mittens. Last year, teachers worked twice as hard for half of the results."

As far as the curriculum of Klee's class, he said it is mostly music.

"It's really the literature that we pick to study and to rehearse with our students,"

he said. "We have state standards with a list of things that students should be able to know and do, but they're very general. We apply those standards to the music that we've selected and we try to use that music to teach those skills and those understandings."

Klee said being a teacher is hard work, but to those that see it as a "calling" as well as a "profession," it is the best job in the world.

"The pay is not great when you consider the tremendous numbers of hours you spend both in and out of the classroom," he said. "However, the rewards of pride and satisfaction can be significant. As they used to say in the old Army recruiting commercials, 'It's the hardest job you'll ever love!'"

Klee said he believes most music teachers put in more hours than what they're given credit for.

"Before school rehearsals, after school rehearsals, going to band a choir contests on the weekend," he said. "It takes a lot of time and especially if you're serious about what you're doing and you want your group to be good, it requires a little extra time and effort beyond the school day. There are a lot of things that we do that aren't exactly teaching music but if you don't do them and if you don't do them well, you're not going to be able to be successful in the classroom."

Klee is the choir director for Taylor Chapel United Methodist Church and is also a member of the Indiana Jazz Educators Association and the Indiana Bandmasters Association.

Now that he is retired, Klee hopes to do some guest conducting and some honor bands.

"I had a chance to do an All-Region Jazz Band a couple years ago and that was a lot of fun," he said. "I had a chance to conduct the All-State Junior High Band several



years ago and that was a real treat. I hope to do some solo ensemble contest judging and jazz band contest judging and concert band judging. I also hope to work with some bands as a clinician."

For Klee, it's been a thrilling and exciting career and very enjoyable.

"It was a challenging and difficult job at times but there were rewards of being able to work with great kids and great parents as well as great fellow teachers," he said. "Having the support of fantastic administrators really made it worthwhile. Although I do enjoy being retired right now, there's a lot of times I think back on my experiences in the classroom and on the marching band field and on the stage, and I miss those opportunities. Some things I don't miss like fundraisers and faculty meetings. I don't miss those at all, but actually getting a chance to make music with students, you just can't beat it. It's my best purpose in life."

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Kempf advises at alma mater

BY ANDY BARRAND

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After 14 years of teaching physical education, health and being a guidance counselor Jaclyn Kempf stepped away from the profession she loves to mentor students in a whole new world.

Kempf, a graduate of DeKalb High School, was recently recognized by KPC Media Group and the Fort Wayne Business Weekly for her years as a counselor.

Kempf returned to her alma mater 14 years ago as a physical education and health teacher, she then transitioned into the world of being a guidance counselor, a role she filled for 12 years until moving on to a new career late last spring.

"I was fortunate to come back, and it was a great experience that many of my former teachers continued to be my mentors and some of my closest friends," she said.

Kempf, is now a career coach with the J. Kruse Education Center, which was launched in 2020. The center's Career Coaching Academy examines each student's values, interests, person-

ality and skills to map out a personalized, objective-based plan for career placement.

Kempf said she was inspired to become an educator because of her time in school.

"I truly enjoyed my education as a student," she said. "I benefited from the experiences provided by my educators, and the relationships that were built along the way. I knew that was something I wanted to continue."

She said as a student she felt her school community was truly invested in her.

That investment into the students of DeKalb High School is something she worked hard to strive for, while an educator with DeKalb Central School District.

"The most rewarding part of the career was building relationships with students, families, staff and the community," Kempf said.

On the other hand the most challenging aspect of the job was not having enough time in the day.

Kempf found the role as a physical

education and health teacher a natural one as she was always involved in sports during her high school career. While at DeKalb she coached multiple sports.

"I was always involved in athletics, so that was a natural fit," she said. "The last six years that I was there, my husband (Pete Kempf) also taught there and was the head football coach, so much of our lifestyle revolved around school and athletics. It was a very special time in our lives."

Over her career, Kempf said she was blessed with so many positive interactions, but one of the ones that sticks out happened just this past summer. Kempf traveled to the Olympic trials to watch a former student achieve a life-long dream of making Team USA.

"My position in education allowed me to form bonds with many students, and be a part of their lives," she said.

She has also had the opportunity to mentor a former student who has taken on the role as guidance counselor at the school.

"It is so fun to watch her take the role," Kempf said.



First-grade teacher finds reward in students' success

BY KATHRYN BASSETT

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Seeing her students' success in little ways and big has been one of the most rewarding parts of Amanda McGrew's career.

McGrew is a first-grade teacher at James R. Watson Elementary School in Auburn — a grade-level she has been teaching for 11 to 12 years.

"I find it to be such a humbling age group to teach because of how much the students learn and grow in just one year," McGrew said. "I also love to teach reading — there is so much joy in watching the students start to make connections with characters, phonics, reading and writing. That love of reading and watching the growth in my students is what draws me to and keeps me in grade 1."

McGrew said she was inspired to become an educator, hoping to make a difference.

"I wanted to provide a safe, fun and loving environment for all students, no matter what their background is, to learn. Now that I have so many years of faces, names and relationships, I continue to be inspired by both my past students and my future ones," McGrew said.

Reflecting on the most challenging part of her career, McGrew said education is always evolving and best practices are always changing.

"It can be a challenge to 'keep up' while always making sure that I am giving my students everything they need to be successful," McGrew said.

"This is also what makes it interesting and, in many ways, fun. No one can say teaching is boring. It keeps you on your toes."

Another challenge, McGrew said, is maintaining the balance between work and life. McGrew is the mother of four and is married to a teacher.

"I am constantly balancing my classroom kids and my own home life. Some days I am really good at that balance and some days it is the hardest thing I do," McGrew said.

Another rewarding aspect of her career is something as simple as running into her students in public and having them come up for a "hello," a hug, and then catching up with their families, McGrew said.

"I love hearing how they are doing. I appreciate that they remember their first-grade teacher and that they want to tell me about their latest activities or school success. Building those relation-

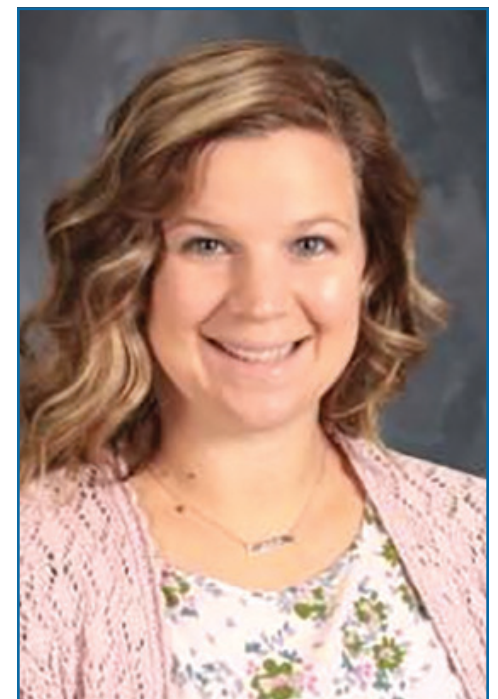
ships is the reward."

Recalling a specific interaction with a student that she will never forget, McGrew said she had a student in class with whom she felt she was not making a good connection. He did not want to come to school and refused to complete work. McGrew said she had conversations with the child's parents and they were supportive, and working together, they came up with a plan to motivate him.

Throughout the school year, there were days the student did so well, and there were days that still were hard, McGrew said. As the year wrapped up, McGrew and the child's parents saw many gains and successes.

"But the moment I will never forget was when he walked into our room on the last day of school and said, 'I love you and I love first grade.' I remember thinking, 'What!' It made all the hills and valleys worth it. It really was a small moment, but it was an interaction that summed up a hard year and made it worth it," McGrew recalled.

To someone who someday would like to be an educator, McGrew advises building relationships with students and creating a climate of safety and love and the rest will follow.



"Build relationships with coworkers, you will need them. And build relationships with your families, Don't assume anything. Sometimes parents/caregivers need just as much grace as we do," McGrew said.

Leasure builds relationships as North Side principal

BY STEVE GARBACZ

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KENDALLVILLE — As principal, Stephanie Leasure is a relationship builder.

Whether it's getting to know and encouraging students, mentoring teachers or working with parents to help them support their children, Leasure gets to see all of them grow, mature and move ahead in life.

Working from the front office of North Side Elementary in Kendallville, her administrator role for East Noble has been rewarding every day for that reason.

And it's also why Leasure has been selected as the Principal of the Year in the Greater Fort Wayne Business Weekly's Education Awards.

"Really it's the relationships with students and the faculty and even actually a lot of parents," Leasure said. "I love the fact that I've been able to be here at East Noble so long and I have built such great relationships, starting in kindergarten and working their way up to fourth and fifth grade.

"It's just amazing. To me it's such an accomplishment for them and sometimes you have to remind them of how far they've come because they don't even see it," she said.

Leasure started her career in elementary schools, teaching for 10 years in Fort Wayne Community Schools, starting in first grade, then moving up to fifth grade and then down to third grade.

Like many teachers, Leasure had received her administrator's license but wasn't sure if or when she'd ever use it.

"I was one that I felt like I needed to teach for many years to know and understand the classroom before becoming an administrator," she said.

After 10 years in the classroom, an opportunity presented itself. Typically Fort Wayne Community Schools required teachers to go through an internship program before stepping into administrator

roles, but a shortage in the district led to the system waiving that requirement in an effort to fill open positions.

Leasure applied and was hired on as assistant principal the next year, a position she held for two years in Fort Wayne and then transferred one year to Marion schools.

After three years in an assistant role, she landed her first principal job with Hamilton Community before coming to East Noble and North Side Elementary, where she's been leading the school for the last six years.

Those six years have been one full generation of elementary schoolers and she's now into the second group of kids working their way from their first day of kindergarten to their last day of fifth grade.

Principal is a job that requires flexibility and adaptability, but it's rewarding in some ways that no two days are ever the same. There's paperwork and staff management duties, sure, but there's also helping with dropoff and pickup, swinging by the lunchroom, dropping in on classes and interacting with students in the hallways, helping out teachers, meeting with parents, managing and supporting substitutes (in especially short supply right now!) and tackling other special projects for the district.

"You can walk into a day thinking you kind of have an agenda and it never works out how you planned. Hopefully you get maybe 50% of the things you had planned done," Leasure said.

The principal plays a unique role in the school, getting the opportunity to act as not just a role model and mentor for students, but also for teachers.

For students, while the principal can be an intimidating authority figure for some, Leasure said she's always tried to get to know students on a personal level and gain their trust and respect. That way, when a student needs something, she hopes they're

not scared to come to her looking for help.

Being seen, in their classrooms, in the lunchroom, on the playground, all of those little interactions and encouragements that happen during the day build up over time.

"They need to see me as a person they can be comfortable with and trust and know that I'm there for them and they can count on me," she said. "Just being out and present."

"Being principal means giving up 180 days in a classroom with a group of students, but it doesn't mean separating from the student body," Leasure said. "It's an opportunity to get to know every student in the building in some way."

The relationship the principal gets to build with teachers isn't so different, as Leasure makes herself available to any faculty member who may find themselves needing some support.

Leasure's mentality that she needed to spend a long time in the classroom before moving to administration has put her in the school office in her mid-career, allowing her to be a bridge between both new, young teachers and veteran teachers who have been in the classroom for decades.

Supporting that staff could mean giving some instructional tips to a new teacher, while helping an older teacher learn and utilize some new technology to its fullest, for example.

"I always tell the teachers, 'I will help you in any way shape or form.' Anything they need pretty much, I will help them with," said Leasure, who said one important lesson she also stresses is for teachers to have a personal life outside of school, knowing that the job can consume their lives if they let it.

Teachers are dedicated to meeting their students' needs, not just academic but social and emotional too, and if they need a helping hand to reach a student or work with a family, Leasure is always ready to assist.



"When so many things happen in their classroom, when they have a student they know is struggling, they don't always have the answer on how to solve it. I always step in and try to help," she said.

Becoming an administrator isn't a route every teacher wants to take eventually, but for those who feel they have more to contribute beyond instruction, Leasure encourages them not to be scared about the prospect of giving up that classroom environment.

It will still always be a part of the job, as well as opportunities to impact even more people in your school and community.

"Leadership is very rewarding. I think many people are afraid to go into leadership because of the politics and everything else. But you still work with children, adults, parents and the community and everything," she said. "You interact with children every day, you get to see light bulbs go off and you get to see all of those same things."



Law enforcement veteran shares criminal justice knowledge

BY SUE CARPENTER

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When Bradley Martin retired after more than 25 years of law enforcement experience, he turned his attention to mentoring those wishing to enter the field he loved.

Martin is now Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice Department at Trine University Jannen School of Arts & Sciences.

Life experience within the criminal justice field and the love of the field of study drew him to teaching.

He earned a Bachelor's Degree from Bowling Green State University and Master's Degree from the University of Toledo. While working, he obtained a J.D. from the University of Toledo and completed coursework in a Ph.D. in education, specializing in human resource development, also from the University of Toledo.

Martin retired in 2018 with 28 years of

law enforcement experience on the state and federal levels.

His particular area of professional interest is the study of training, education and development of practitioners in the criminal justice system, as well as criminal investigations.

"The most appealing or interesting aspect of the criminal justice system is the teamwork and closeness among the practitioners regardless of the specific area of the CJ system where you are employed," said Martin. "One definitely has to be a team player and be attracted to such an environment to successfully operate within the system."

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of his career in education is trying to adapt to a variety of learners including varying levels of motivation and learning ability. It is also challenging to incorporate technology appropriately into the classroom as well as identify a variety of teaching tools.

Martin sees meeting with students one-on-one who come to him for career guidance and advice as the most rewarding part of his career.

"In the short time I have been here, I have seen students go into local law enforcement as well as state police departments (both in and outside of Indiana)," said Martin. "I have seen students go to graduate/law school as well as several who have become probation officers. Finally, I have seen students enter the field of institutional corrections (e.g. prison systems), as well as juvenile corrections (e.g. juvenile probation, juvenile treatment center)."

One unforgettable moment he recalls is when a seemingly uninterested student in the classroom shared with Martin how much he enjoyed the class at the end of the semester.

To those interested in becoming an educator, Martin advises to "be ready for exhausting and long days — but it does become rewarding over time."



Working with special ed students a rewarding challenge for Whitman

BY STEVE GARBACZ

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LAGRANGE — Being a teacher can be challenging enough in itself, managing a classroom of dozens of youngsters.

But working with special education students with physical or development disabilities can present an even greater challenge for a young teacher.

But for Casey Whitman, the Greater Fort Wayne Business Weekly's 2021 Education Awards Emerging Star, the challenge was one worth the big reward for helping students meet their school goals.

Whitman, an Indiana University grad who recently worked at Lakeland Intermediate School and now is at Butler Elementary, got her start in education working with special education students in the classroom.

Like many educators, the impact teachers had on her in her school career inspired her to follow education as a job path.

"All of the wonderful teachers I had growing up showed me how fun education can be. I have always loved helping

and taking care of others so it just came naturally," she said.

A drive to help and take care of others persuaded her to pursue a career in education focusing on special education and those students who had additional needs in the classroom.

While special education can be one of the most challenging jobs in a school, Whitman found that it could also be one of the most rewarding.

"Being an advocate for others who do not know how, or cannot advocate for themselves, is something I have always found rewarding. The field of special education provides me with many opportunities to do so," she said.

"The most challenging thing is understanding that a behavior is just the student's way of saying they need help. There have been times where students say or do things that they do not really mean, they just do not know how to express themselves appropriately," she said. "The most rewarding part of my job is getting to know all these students and watch them grow. I love being able to see them excel in

things and have confidence in themselves."

For example, Whitman recalled one student who lacked confidence in himself and his abilities at school. She worked with him, talking about positive aspects about himself on a daily basis, working to build his esteem. But even still, he was really hesitant about working with others for fear of embarrassing himself.

But Whitman stood behind him, literally, to help usher him into the room with his peers and helping him get to work with others. Once he got settled and started to work, he turned out to be a fine addition to the group.

"He got to do his job and he did it very well! He thanked me later for making him go in the room. I reminded him that he got himself in the room, I just watched," she said.

For current students or youngsters who are considering education as a career one day, Whitman said the most important thing is to not give up. The ups and downs of education be exhausting, frustrating even, but the rewards are there too for people who can work through the tough times.



"Don't give up. This job can be exhausting, mentally and physically. You will be so glad you pushed through. It is the most rewarding job you could ask for," she said.

Elementary teacher taking the time to meet needs of her students

BY RACHAEL HARTMAN

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Whitley County teacher Heather Shively felt the call to be an educator at an early age. Today, that calling has led to a strong career and each step along the way has helped her become an even stronger leader.

"I've wanted to be a teacher ever since I was a first grader myself," Shively remembers. "I caught the teaching bug and could never get rid of it. I loved everything about it, and I knew that was the only choice for me."

This passion for teaching allowed her the chance to shadow other teachers in high school. She focused particularly on early education, helping teach at elementary schools.

"Five, 6 and 7 year-olds are the best people on the planet," she says. "They are so full of endless joy and wonder. I love to live in wonder with them."

Being a leader in the classroom means a lot of things. It's having the drive to make your students stronger, giving them the tools they need to succeed. It's using your voice to support your students, and even your fellow teachers, when they need it the most. It's also about being open to the things those around you can teach you too to make you a stronger person. This is one of the reasons Shively is drawn to teach elementary education.

"It helps me see and appreciate the

small, but beautiful, things that adults tend to take for granted," she says. "Everything in the world of school is new and exciting and wonderful for them. They are so excited to learn, and their brains are little sponges that just soak up everything. They love big, forgive quickly and they make me laugh daily. I can't think of anyone better to spend my days with."

Being a leader as a teacher also means taking the time for others – to help others through their hardships and needs and lift them up in their success as well.

Shively recalls a time with one particular student where this rang true. She shares that this particular student was only a few days into their school experience. They were overwhelmed and exhausted. In the end, she says this student ended up underneath a cafeteria table crying. Shively stopped what she was doing, made her way to the table and knelt down with her arms open wide to comfort them.

"He immediately fell into my arms, and I just held him for a while as he cried," she remembers. "That moment always sticks in my mind as a reminder of just how important it is for teachers to build relationships with their students and create a safe and trusting environment for them to learn."

It's those relationships – with her students, parents, fellow staff members – that Shively says has been the most rewarding part of her teaching career, and

those relationships have stuck with her over the last 10 years.

But teaching also has its challenges. For Shively, one of the biggest is finding the balance of pushing to meet the academic standards while also making sure she takes the time students require to meet their other needs as well.

"The expectations placed on young students are so demanding and ignore what we know about how kids learn and succeed," she says. "The challenge for me has been in trying to find a balance between what 'needs' to be done to meet the expectations of administration and the state, and doing what I know is right and best for my students."

Being a leader though also means helping other teachers succeed, and working with others to teach the next generation of teachers is an important step for Shively. It's part of the advice she gives to future teachers.

"Find a way to get as much early experience with students and in classrooms as possible," she says. "Volunteer in classrooms or to teach Sunday School at church. Ask your favorite teacher if you can shadow them for a day. Watch the great educators around you and ask them questions to soak up every bit of knowledge you can from them. You'll learn more from experiencing education first-hand than from anywhere else."

Reading, as we know, is such an



important piece too, and Shively has a favorite book recommendation to share with other teachers and students as well to encourage teachers and young readers – "The Book with no Pictures" by B.J. Novak.

"It is utterly ridiculous, and you will have to embrace the silly and goofy side of it, but the end result is, 'can you read it to me again'," Shively says. "That, to me, is the ultimate goal when reading to a child."

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Central Noble teacher earns KPC education award

BY JOE MCQUEEN

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ALBION — Deb Sieber has always enjoyed working with children and watching them learn and grow.

As a fifth grade teacher at Central Noble Elementary School, she has made lasting connections with many of her students and it's what got her into teaching.

"I was a stay-at-home mom with four kids. I was involved with the school as a volunteer," Sieber said. "There were a couple friends of mine that were teachers, who I admired. It just clicked for me how that's what I wanted to do."

She was recently named teacher of the year for KPC Media Group's Education Awards for her time as an educator.

Sieber decided to go back to school while raising her kids where she earned her degree in elementary education at Purdue University Fort Wayne in December 2004.

She started teaching at Central Noble Elementary in January 2005 and has been there ever since.

Her favorite subjects to teach are often American history and grammar.

She said she likes to build relationships with the students and thinks of her classroom as a family.

"I like to share my life experiences, get to know my students and see what they're excited about and what they're interested in

learning," she said. "Building connections with the students is an important part of being a teacher."

She finds that the rewarding part of her job is creating relationships with students long after they're done with elementary school.

She said she has many former students who are now at Central Noble Junior/Senior High School who come up to her and catch up with her about what they're up to now.

"If you can have a lasting impact on a student that they can think back to your classroom and know that you cared about them, they remember that I taught them to love learning," she said.

Sieber believes in her students being successful and making a difference in their lives.

Teaching a class of more than 20 students can be challenging at times. She said the difficulties of being a teacher are not being able to meet all the needs of her students all the time, particularly with students who are struggling.

"Every student is at a different level and learn in different ways," she said.

The job can be rewarding when teachers are able to help struggling students be successful. Her class is 22 students and she finds it can be hard to give certain students more one on one attention for things they need help with.

When she first heard that she had won the teacher of the year award, her first thoughts were of shock.

"I received an email from when I first saw it and I was like 'this can't be right,'" she said. "Not long after I got a phone call and I remember asking them, 'are you sure?' because it just shocked me."

She doesn't feel she does anything different from her colleagues. She said she's worked with many great teachers for whom she admires and have taught her things throughout her career.

The school breaks the teachers up into teams for each grade level and work together to bounce ideas off each other and share different things.

She said other teachers will tell her about their ideas and the rest of them can go along with it and try it themselves.

"We have a very supportive principal.

Mr. (Jared) Knipper allows us to follow our passions and he knows he believes in us," she said. "That really helps as far as the work environment goes."

She believes sharing ideas amongst each other makes them better as teachers and she can learn from new teachers who are right out of college.

During the pandemic, schools were put under serious restrictions around how and where they can teach. She found new ways she can teach her students during that time.

One thing she started doing was taking her students outdoors. She discovered that she really enjoyed teaching her students projects in the outdoors.



"They learned how to design a trail system that we built last year, we made maple syrup by tapping trees," she said. "Most of the sap we took to a local person who was able to boil it down and convert into syrup."

She was able to incorporate things like math, reading and writing while doing those outside activities with her students.

"We were able to take a lot of the standards we needed to meet and apply that by doing this outdoor activity," she said.

Educator learns life lessons from students

BY SHERYL PRENTICE

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LIGONIER — West Noble sixth grade science teacher Becky Younce could write a book about the "kid stories" she's collected in her years of teaching. These stories run the spectrum of sad, happy or funny.

"I had a student bring me a bat in a freezer box with saran wrap over it," Younce said. "I have retrieved multiple wild and captive snakes from the building. Randy and I rescued an 'alligator' from the trees of Ligonier."

The "alligator" was an iguana that someone had released outdoors.

Other stories are life changing.

"The one student interaction that changed my way of thinking was when I had a student who had a glioblastoma brain tumor that was diagnosed the spring before I had her," Younce said. "She came to school every day and kept telling me that she needed to be at school because someone needed her. She changed my way of thinking and reversed

the roles, teaching me that someone needs me at school and I need to be there and be looking for who needs me. Thank you Lauren for those very wise words."

That year, Lauren succumbed to her illness in January. Her passing inspired her classmates to give birth to the West Noble Memorial Garden, where she could be remembered and honored. Younce recalled that teachable moment:

"They wanted to build a butterfly garden and we needed water, so a guy came in and showed us a waterfall system," she said. "When he was done, I asked the cost and was floored to find out it was \$12,000."

"I in turn told the kids I thought that was a little out of their price range. They proceeded to tell me they could do it. Needless to say, the students showed me what you can do when you are passionate about something. When I added up all the grants and donations, it came to a total of \$26,000."

Younce chose her career by following in the footsteps of her father, an educator in Prairie Heights Community Schools

for 37 years. During her college years, her father often reminded her that people choose education for the outcome, not the income.

Younce has had interesting outcomes, even in her small corner of the West Noble community. Her students have made their mark in many places all over the world.

"I have a student who worked with NASA, numerous doctors, dentists, police officers, physical therapists, missionaries, mechanics, bankers, teachers.... you name it," Younce said. "I even have a professional race horse driver."

Outside of school, Younce is a LaGrange County 4-H leader and attends the LaGrange Church of God.

Younce recommends reading "Cowboy Ethics" by James Owens, and has used ideas from Ron Clark's "Essential 55" book.

"I use his (Owens) Code of the West in my classroom to help guide my students in decision-making processes," she said.



Vazquez advises to do before teaching

He serves as medical director of Trine program

BY MIKE MARTURELLO

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When it comes to teaching, Dr. Emilio de Jesus Vazquez suggests people do before they teach.

Vazquez has long worked with students who are working toward careers in medicine. He serves as medical director for Trine University's Master of Physicians Assistant Studies.

And when you look at his resume, he definitely was a doer before he became a teacher.

"If possible, spend some time doing the work you are going to teach. If medicine, have a clinical practice, if biology or other scientific discipline, do field work, if in English/writing or whatever, do it before you try teaching it," Vazquez said.

Vazquez joined Trine University from DeKalb Health where he served as chief medical officer/vice president for medical affairs. He was also medical director for the Chest Pain Center at DeKalb Health and for the DeKalb Health Home Health and Hospice. In addition, he has also been serving as the medical director at Laurels of DeKalb in Butler, Miller's Merry Manor in Garrett and Wesley Health Care and Rehabilitation in Auburn.

In addition, he finds time to do volunteer

work in the community. He volunteers at St. Martin's Health Services, a free clinic in Garrett, and also with Blue Heron Ministries and Little River Wetland Project.

Vazquez arrived in northeast Indiana after a distinguished career in the U.S. Navy Medical Corps. He had held six different commissioned leadership positions with the Navy. He had been a director of emergency medical services; department head of a medical department; director of a family medicine clinic, anesthesia services, laboratory services and clinical services; associate director of a Family Medicine Residency and sector medical liaison in Croatia.

He earned a bachelor of science degree in medical technology from George Washington University in Washington, D.C., and his medical doctor degree from University of Maryland School of Medicine in Baltimore. He served an internship at Naval Hospital Bremerton in Bremerton, Wash.; a surgical residency at Naval Hospital Portsmouth in Portsmouth, Virginia.; a family medicine residency and was chief resident at Naval Hospital Charleston in Charleston, South Carolina; and was a fellow in advanced women's health and faculty development while completing a residency at University of Tennessee.

Vazquez was born in Habana, Cuba, in 1952 and emigrated as a refugee with his family to the United States in 1962. They eventually settled outside of Washington D.C. in Bethesda, Maryland, where he attended high school.

After graduation, he attended two years

at The Catholic University in Washington, D.C., before enlisting in the U.S. Navy as a seaman recruit in May 1972. He started recruit training in August 1972 and graduated in December 1972 as a seaman.

He entered Hospital Corpsman School, graduating in April 1973 as a 3rd class petty officer. He then attended medical laboratory technician school, graduating in June of 1974 as a 2nd Class Petty Officer. In 1976, he completed requirements for a bachelor's degree in medical technology and passed the American Society of Clinical Pathologists Medical Technologist Certification exam. He subsequently was promoted to a 1st Class Petty Officer and became senior instructor for the Navy's School of Medical Technology, leading the inaugural and subsequent class through their training.

In 1976, he married his wife Deanna. In 1978, he started medical school at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, graduating in 1982 as a member of the Alpha Omega Alpha Medical Honor Society. He returned to full-time active duty with the U.S. Navy and was sent for an internship at Naval Hospital Bremerton in Washington state.

After a 25-year career in the Navy, he retired from active duty with the rank of commander and was, for a year and a half, the associate director of a residency program in Madisonville, Kentucky. Leaving that program, he began work for DeKalb Memorial Hospital — now Parkview DeKalb Hospital — holding first a practice position in family medicine at a small rural clinic and eventually becoming



chief medical officer and subsequently interim chief executive officer, a position held for almost a year. During this time he taught physicians assistants, nurse practitioners and medical students in his office and in didactic lecture halls, and became certified in long-term care medical direction as well as becoming a certified ringside physician through the American College of Sports Medicine.

In 2016, he became part-time medical director of the Masters of Physicians Assistant Program at Trine, moving to full-time medical director in 2018. In August of that year, he became program director and associate professor in the program.

West Noble teacher makes difference in student lives

BY SHERYL PRENTICE

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LIGONIER — A keen interest in plants and animals at a young age drew West Noble science teacher Randy Younce into a career as an educator. It was a path he knew well.

"I have been very fortunate to be surrounded by educators in my family," Younce said. "My biggest inspiration was my brother and father-in-law who were both very successful educators."

Younce has spent his career sharing science knowledge with his students, but the toughest challenge is in staying current with technology advancements and the changes in how students learn information.

"Being a small part of many students who have gone on to do impressive things in their life" is the reward of his career in education, Younce said.

Seeing that reward can take a long time as students leave their classroom to pursue success. Younce learned firsthand that a teacher never knows the effect he or she may have on a student.

"I had a student that was very quiet and reserved in class," he said. "I really thought that I had very little impact on her. Then her senior year she gave a Most Influential Educator Award to me and gave a very moving speech on how I was a positive influence on her life."

Younce recommends reading "7 Habits of Highly Effective People" by Dr. Stephen Covey and "Cowboy Ethics" by James P. Owen as books that offer guidance to both students and adults.

Younce has spent 36 of his 37 years as a teacher at West Noble, starting in the fall of 1985. In addition to teaching science, he's been

a coach for more than 36 years, from sixth grade all the way to the varsity boys level.

"I was the head coach for four years and my wife was my assistant, then I coached another four years as girls varsity assistant and my wife was the head coach," he said. "I have also coached middle school cross country for five years, middle school golf for 10 years, varsity girls golf for three years and was assistant coach in track boys and girl for multiple years. I was a student assistant women's basketball coach at Huntington University my senior year as well."

Younce believes a career as an educator is valuable.

"If education is a passion of yours, then strongly pursue it," he said. "You don't become a teacher for the pay. "It is the influence you have on so many young lives that makes the difference."

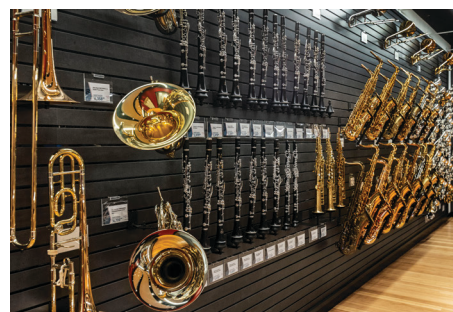


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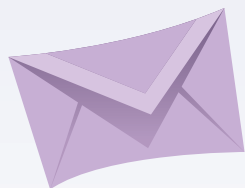
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