



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

NEWS RELEASE

42 Individuals Honored with NFHS Speech, Debate, Theatre and Music Educator Awards

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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INDIANAPOLIS, IN (March 17, 2021) — A total of 42 high school speech, debate, theatre and music teachers and coaches have been selected as recipients of awards from the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS).

The NFHS Speech, Debate, Theatre and Academic Association is honoring 20 individuals with the 2020-21 Outstanding Speech/Debate/Theatre Educator Awards, and the NFHS Music Association is honoring 22 individuals with the 2020-21 Outstanding Music Educator Awards.

Seven of the 20 speech/debate/theatre awards are section awards, and the other 13 are state awards. Section recipients receive a plaque from the NFHS to be presented in their respective state, while state award recipients receive a certificate. Likewise, seven music section awards will be presented, along with 15 state award recipients.

Recipients of the 2020-21 NFHS Outstanding Speech/Debate/Theatre Educator Awards are:

SECTION: Section 2 – Molly Seifert, Kentucky; Section 3 – Pamela Ware, Georgia; Section 4 – Holly Stanfield, Wisconsin; Section 5 – Gary Harmon, Kansas; Section 6 – Magda Irizarry-Mirelez, Texas; Section 7 – Tanya Roundy, Utah; Section 8 – Kara Smith, Idaho.

STATE: Arkansas - Julie Rine; Arizona - Norm Rumsey; Colorado - David Montera; Iowa - Teresa Lawler; Illinois - Chuck Cavazos; Minnesota - Ben Bakken Ballentine; Mississippi - Darin Maier; Missouri - Ed Kappeler; Nebraska - Tommy Bender; Oklahoma - Christian Jones; Oregon - Ameena Amdahl-Mason; Virginia - Michael Villacrusis; Washington - Kristina Cummins.

Recipients of the 2020-21 NFHS Outstanding Music Educator Awards are:

SECTION: Section 1 – Anne Severy, Vermont; Section 3 – Lisa Clark, Mississippi; Section 4 – Elizabeth Fritz, Iowa; Section 5 – Susan Laushman, Kansas; Section 6 – Wesley Singleton, Oklahoma; Section 7 – Mishy Kirby, Utah; Section 8 – Jennifer Brooks, Oregon.

STATE: Alabama - Becky Halliday; Arkansas - Peggy Jeffries; Colorado - Tim Libby; Idaho - Wayne Millett; Illinois - Andy Davis; Indiana - Douglas Elmore; Maine - Kristen Thomas; Minnesota - Burton Svendsen; Missouri - Brian Reeves; Montana - Jenanne Solberg; Nebraska - Del Whitman; New Mexico - Tyler North; New York - Erin Tapia; South Dakota - Daniel Eye; Washington - Bruce Walker.

Following are bios on this year's 42 award winners:

Speech/Debate/Theatre Educator Award Bios

SECTION RECIPIENTS

Section 2

Molly Seifert

Erlanger, Kentucky

Molly Seifert is a teacher and forensics coach at Beechwood High School in Fort Mitchell, Kentucky. She has been a middle school and high school educator for 18 years and has worn a variety of hats during her career, including director of musicals and one-act plays, competitive forensics teams coach, speech and drama teacher, and sponsor of her school's Gay-Straight Alliance and Zoology Club.

Seifert is regional manager of the Kentucky High School Speech League, and she is a founding member of the Speech Professional Education Alliance of Kentucky (SPEAK). She has coached numerous regional and state champions, as well as individuals who have advanced to national competition. Since 2005, Seifert has directed more than 20 plays with the Fort Mitchell Recreation Summer Drama Camp.

Seifert was inducted into the KHSSL Hall of Fame in 2019 and, in 2020, she was named Kentucky Coach of the Year by the National Speech and Debate Association.

Section 3
Pamela Ware
Gainesville, Georgia

Pamela Ware has been director of theatre and debate coach at Gainesville (Georgia) High School for the past 45 years after beginning her career in education as an English teacher and director of theatre in Selma, Alabama. She is truly a living legend at Gainesville High and has developed annual winning programs in One-Act Play and Literary for many years.

Ware has served on the Georgia Thespian State Board since 1975 and was president of the Alabama Thespian Association for three years in the 1960s. Ware has also been active in the Educational Theatre Association, serving on the Board of Trustees for 17 years as well as a term as president. She established the First International Troupe at Gainesville High School in 1975.

Ware received the Louisiana Tech College of Education Alumna of the Year award in 2015 and was a Louisiana Tech University Centennial Distinguished Alumnus in 1994. In December 1994, the Pam Ware Performing Arts Center was dedicated in Gainesville.

Section 4
Holly Stanfield
Lake Geneva, Wisconsin

Holly Stanfield has been involved in public school music education almost 40 years, including the past 30 years in the Kenosha (Wisconsin) Unified School District, and currently teaches theatre at Mary D. Bradford High School in Kenosha. Stanfield has led Bradford High School to become one of the most decorated schools in Wisconsin High School Forensic Association (WHSFA) history, particularly musicals in the One-Act Play 40-minute format.

Stanfield's students have appeared numerous times on the WHSFA/Wisconsin High School Theatre Festival showcase state and more than a dozen times on the International Thespian Festival main stage. Stanfield was founding director of the Wisconsin chapter of the Educational Theatre Association (EdTA), and she was invited by EdTA to direct the Thespian national cast of *Thoroughly Modern Millie: School Edition*.

Stanfield was inducted into the WHSFA Theatre Hall of Fame in the association's second class and, in 2016, she was inducted into the EdTA Hall of Fame. She also was the 2014

recipient of the Children's Theatre Foundation Reba Robertson Award and has been honored as Teacher of the Year on several occasions.

Section 5

Gary Harmon Salina, Kansas

Gary Harmon has been involved as an English and speech and debate coach at the high school and college levels in Kansas for more than 55 years. After teaching and coaching at four Kansas high schools for 10 years, Harmon landed at Salina Central High School in 1984 and taught English, debate and speech, and coached debate, speech and baseball for 18 years. Since 2004, Harmon has taught speech, debate and English at Kansas Wesleyan University in Salina.

Harmon's debate teams at Salina enjoyed great success, including 4-speaker debate state champions in 1990 and 2-speaker debate state champions in 2001 and 2002. His 1993 team was Kansas State High School Activities Association (KSHSAA) Lincoln-Douglas Debate state champion, and, in 1988, the National Forensic League (NFL) Student Congress Senator national champion.

Harmon, who started the state fair debates and high school debate camp that still operate today, is a two-time Kansas Speech Communications Teacher of the Year. He is a member of the NFL Coaches Hall of Fame (National Speech and Debate Association) and the Kansas Speech Hall of Fame (Kansas Speech Communications association).

Section 6

Magda Irizarry-Mirelez Bay City, Texas

Magda Irizarry-Mirelez has been speech/debate coach and theatre director at Bay City High School in Bay City, Texas, for 23 years, after earning her bachelor's degree from Sul Ross State University in Alpine, Texas, and her master's from the University of Houston. Mirelez's Bay City speech teams have enjoyed tremendous success in Texas University Interscholastic League (UIL) competition.

Under Mirelez's direction, the Bay City speech teams are four-time UIL state speech champions, including 14 UIL individual state champions. Mirelez has coached 86 UIL state qualifiers and 41 UIL state finalists. In 2008, Bay City was National Junior Forensic League CX Debate national champion, and Bay City was National Speech and Debate Association (NSDA) School of Excellence recipient in 2005. Mirelez is a five-time UIL state theatre finalist director, and she has directed 35 full-length musicals and productions.

Among her many honors, Mirelez was the Bay City Teacher of the Year in 2018, and she received the Texas UIL Sponsor of Excellence award in 2012. Mirelez is a 2 Diamond NSDA Speech Coach.

Section 7

Tanya Roundy

Saratoga Springs, Utah

Tanya Roundy has taught English, debate, theatre, film literature and financial literacy at several schools in Utah and California the past 15 years, beginning at Dixon Middle School in Provo, Utah, in 2006, where she taught theatre, directed plays and the school musical. From 2007 to 2012, Roundy directed the theatre and speech/debate teams at North Sanpete High School in Mt. Pleasant, Utah.

During her years at North Sanpete, Roundy helped to create the Utah Theatre Teachers Association, the training and certification of judges and a program to run tournaments more efficiently. She also assisted with region and state tournaments conducted by the Utah High School Activities Association.

Roundy moved to California in 2012 and revitalized a theatre program during her three years at the school. She returned to Utah in 2015 and took over the debate team at Alta High School in Sandy. Within three years, she grew the debate team from five students to more than 30. She then moved to a charter school where she continued to enjoy success as the theatre and debate coach. Currently, Roundy is president of the Utah Debate Coaches Association.

Section 8

Kara Smith

Boise, Idaho

Kara Smith has taught at three Idaho schools the past 20 years and currently teaches and coaches speech and debate at Timberline High School in Boise, where she has been since 2016. Smith was speech and debate coach at Lake City High School in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, for 16 years before moving to Boise in 2016. For three years (2016-2019), she coached at two Boise schools – Capital High School and Timberline High School.

Smith has been chair of the Inland Empire National Forensic League/National Speech and Debate Association (NSDA) for two separate terms (2002-04 and 2010-16), and since 2018, she has been the Idaho State Speech commissioner.

Last year, Smith was selected Idaho Speech Arts Teacher of the Year and was inducted into the Idaho Speech Arts Teachers Association Hall of Fame. Among her other honors, Smith was Idaho State Debate Coach/Teacher of the Year in 2017 and received the NSDA Distinguished Service Citation Gold Key in 2018. In June 2021, she will receive her Fourth Diamond at the NSDA National Tournament.

STATE RECIPIENTS

Ameena Amdahl-Mason Portland, Oregon

In the past 20 years, Ameena Amdahl-Mason has left her mark on the Oregon speech and debate community. She is currently the assistant speech and debate coach at Clackamas (OR) High School, where she is also a math teacher. She and Jennifer LeSieur have worked closely as coaches since she arrived at Clackamas in 2007. Their efforts have paved the way for students to qualify for the national tournament in 2009, 2013, 2014, 2019 and 2020.

Amdahl-Mason's history of serving her state is vast. In addition to coaching her Clackamas speech and debate team, she has been a member of the state championship committee since 2009. In 2014, she began serving the North Oregon National Speech and Debate Association (NSDA) Committee. She assumed the role of Oregon School Activities Association (OSAA) Proven Excellence Advisor (tracking alternate qualifications to the state tournament) in 2016 and became the district director for Clackamas' state qualifying district in 2018.

Amdahl-Mason was among the first advocates for technology and the use of Tabroom, an online tournament management system. When the OSAA district and state championships moved to Tabroom, she assisted by leading the transition. In doing so, Amdahl-Mason learned available programs, created manuals and workshops, and developed a practice tournament that could be easily managed by other coaches.

Ben Bakken Ballentine
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Ben Bakken Ballentine has served as Hill-Murray School's artistic director for the past nine years in Maplewood, Minnesota. He looked to share lessons with students based on his experiences from high school through his time as a local professional actor. Ballentine's teaching has drawn close to 25 percent of the student population to participate in Hill-Murray's theatre program.

Since his foray into teaching began, Ballentine has become a highly coveted adjudicator for the Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL) One Act Play Contest. Under his direction at the competition level, Hill-Murray reached the State One Act Play Contest with its production of *The Great Gatsby* in Ballentine's first year. The show earned a star rating. Since he started, Ballentine's productions have appeared three times at state with two-star ratings.

Ballentine's program has been honored with many top year end awards over the years. Among those at the state level are The Spotlight Awards Outstanding Overall Achievement in Musical Theatre and starred performances at the MSHSL One Act Play State Festival.

Tommy Bender
Lincoln, Nebraska

Tommy Bender's own high school experiences in speech and theater have served him well as an educator of 27 years. Equipped with a passion for those subjects, he gave back to his alma mater at Crete (Nebraska) High School for eight years as a teacher and coach before moving to Lincoln, Nebraska, in 2002. There, he has served as Lincoln Southeast High School's head speech coach and oral communications teacher.

While at Crete, Bender started a new chapter in the National Speech and Debate Association (NSDA). It was during this time that he also joined the executive committee of the Nebraska Speech Communication and Theatre Association (NSCTA), serving as its convention vice president. Bender's work with these organizations continues today. He served as the NSDA South Chair for eight years and was NSCTA President from 2018 to 2020.

Among Bender's accomplishments are the students who placed in the top 14 in the nation at several national tournaments, in addition to the multiple district and state champions that he has coached. At Crete, where he helped grow the speech team from one to more than 25 students, Bender eventually earned his first NSDA Speech Coach of the Year award.

Chuck Cavazos
Schaumburg, Illinois

For more than 31 years, Chuck Cavazos has taught communications, composition and speech at Elk Grove (Illinois) High School. His current efforts consist of teaching a dual credit college speech program, which is offered in partnership with Eastern Illinois University. Cavazos' expertise in the area translates to his role as head coach of the Elk Grove speech team, which has garnered many awards at the Illinois High School Association (IHSA) state finals.

When wearing his coaching hat, Cavazos' successes date to 1988 when his Thornton (Illinois) won the IHSA State Championship in speech. Once the head coach at Elk Grove in 1990, his speech team earned a fourth-place finish in 1994. In 2009, Elk Grove captured the state title in Humorous Duet Acting under Cavazos' direction, and had the 2016 and 2017 individual state champion in oratorical declamation. Elk Grove has hosted the IHSA regional or sectional tournament on numerous occasions, as well as the IHSA state finals in 2000.

Cavazos has served on the IHSA State Tournament Committee for more than 20 of his 30 years in coaching. He is also an Illinois Speech and Theatre Association board member, who has been a strong advocate of speech and theatre through a number of workshops and activities.

Kristina Cummins
Pasco, Washington

For Kristina Cummins, a love for theatre blossomed in high school thanks to her high school production of Roger and Hammerstein's *Carousel*. Since then, her journey from aspiring actress to veteran educator swapped her California roots for her current setting as the theatre arts teacher at Capital High School in Olympia, Washington. It is here she has grown the thespian program from 12 students to the more than 40 participating in it today.

Cummins and her cohorts produce two mainstage plays at Capital, as well as a large-scale musical and a student directed one act festival known as Dramafest. Competitively, Capital participates in thespian competitions for performance and technical theatre, as well as the state thespian festival. For the past seven years, Cummins' thespian troupe has been recognized as a Gold Medal Honor Troupe.

As Cummins grew as an educator, she did so as a leader. In that capacity, she became involved with the Washington State Thespians. Cummins is currently in her sixth year as a co-director for the group, which has involved her overseeing association growth through new state theatre programs and expanding local and state festivals. Her other organizational contributions include serving as liaison to the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association (WIAA) and the Office of the Superintendent for Public Instruction (OSPI). Cummins' work with the Educational Theatre Association (EdTA), a national thespian organization, has been ongoing since her time as a part-time theatre director at Tumwater (Washington) High School.

Christian Jones
Broken Arrow, Oklahoma

Christian Jones is the head debate coach and AP Seminar teacher for Union Public Schools in Tulsa, Oklahoma – a position he has held since 2011. In that time, more Union students have qualified for the National Speech and Debate (NSDA) National Tournament than those combined in the years leading to Jones' arrival.

Only one year did Union not have a single student qualify for NSDA Nationals under Jones' watch. In that span, however, they did qualify for every Oklahoma Secondary School Activities Association (OSSAA) state tournament. In 2017, Jones coached the high school policy debate team to the final round of the Urban Debate National Championship. He has also had two

additional high school teams place in the top 20 at two different national championship tournaments. Jones also coached a middle school policy debate team to the final round of the 2017 NSDA Middle School Nationals.

Jones' service to debate started in 2012 as a tournament director for the Union Forensic Society (UFS) Invitational Tournament. While he has served that role every year since, it has grown into one of Oklahoma's largest tournaments in recent years and a qualifier for both the Extemp Tournament of Champions and National Individual Events Tournament of Champions (NIETOC). Since 2013, Jones has been an extemp prep room proctor for the NSDA National Tournament.

Ed Kappeler Ballwin, Missouri

Ed Kappeler was new to Pacific, Missouri, in 1997 when a veteran educator helped reshape his idea of who he was as a teacher. In the years that followed, Kappeler relayed Dan McClain's message into meaningful relationships with Pacific High School students as an English teacher, speech director and theater director. Kappeler served as the latter for 16 years (1997 to 2013), directing 16 mainstage plays and serving as assistant director of 13. Much like Kappeler's teaching role has since 1997, his speech director duties have been ongoing since 2002.

Currently in his second term, Kappeler is a prominent member of the Missouri State High School Activities Association (MSHSAA) Speech Advisory Committee. In that role, he is one of 10 members who advises the MSHSAA Board on rules revisions and other speech-related issues. Despite no formal speech or theater education, Kappeler's informal training via observation has grown Pacific's speech team from four members in 2002 to one of the state's top programs. Since 2008, Pacific has won every Four Rivers Conference speech meet, and had 24 state finalists and three state champions during Kappeler's tenure.

Boasting 28 years of experience, Kappeler's contributions to education have been recognized. In 2014, he was Missouri's South Central District Speech Director of the Year. From 2017 to 2018, he earned four honors, including the 2017 Missouri South Central Region Teacher of the Year award and being named a Missouri Teacher of the Year finalist in 2018.

Teresa Lawler
Ankeny, Iowa

Teresa Lawler is a teacher in the Ankeny (Iowa) School District, where she contributes her knowledge of English, composition and more to the students of Ankeny High School and Ankeny Centennial High School. Since 1984, she's served as a teacher, coach and director in several roles within the interscholastic setting. Among them are drama director, student council advisor and speech coach.

Lawler's work as a speech coach with the Iowa High School Speech Association includes guiding students as an individual coach since 1994 and with large groups since 1988-89. Her collaboration with students in writing original work and creating meaningful performances has resulted in 170 individuals and 37 groups receiving all-state speech recognition. Lawler has also judged contests since 1984, and reestablished Lincoln-Douglas and Student Congress debate in 1999 after its 20-year absence.

The Iowa Governor's Scholar Program tabbed Lawler as its Most Influential Teacher in 2005, 2007, 2008 and 2017. She was also named the Iowa Student Council Advisor of the Year in 2002.

Darin Maier
Clinton, Mississippi

A teacher of history and director of speech and debate, Darin Maier has served St. Andrew's Episcopal School in Ridgeland, Mississippi, for 21 years. While his roles have varied in that time, his passion for policy debate has aided him as the school's director of speech and debate since 2010.

Maier joined St. Andrew's in 2000 as the associate director of speech and debate, as well as beginning his first stint as a history teacher. He previously was a social studies teacher and debate coach at Stratford Academy in Macon, Georgia, from 1993-97. In 2005, he was promoted to St. Andrew's associate head of the middle school. The new role for Maier coincided with his duties as associate director of speech and debate, which he fulfilled until he assumed his role as director of speech and debate.

The U.S. Presidential Scholars Program tabbed Maier in 2010 as a Distinguished Teacher. Among his speech and debate honors is his selection as an Outstanding Speech/Debate/Theatre Educator for the 2011-12 academic year by the Mississippi High School Activities Association (MHSAA) and NFHS Section 3. Maier has also authored several NFHS High School Debate Topic reports, including the winning topic for 2013-14 on Latin America.

David Montera
Pueblo, Colorado

David Montera has been the speech and debate coach at Centennial High School in Pueblo, Colorado since 1983, after beginning his career in education at Rocky Ford High School in Rocky Ford, Colorado, in 1981. Although officially retired from public school teaching after 38½ years, Montera still coaches speech and debate at Centennial while teaching at St. Therese Catholic Middle School in Pueblo.

Montera's teams at Centennial have enjoyed great success, including winning the Colorado Grande District Trophy three times and the National Speech and Debate Association (NSDA) district chapter award three times.

Montera is a Six Diamond coach with the NSDA. He was named coach of the year in 2019-20 by the Colorado Grande District and he received the 2019 Sharon Wilch Lifetime Achievement Award from the Colorado High School Activities Association.

Julie Rine
Bentonville, Arkansas

Julie Rine, who earned her bachelor's degree from Missouri Southern State University in 2004, is in her 16th year in education. She is currently serving as drama and forensics teacher at Grimsley Junior High School in Centerton, Arkansas. After moving to Arkansas in 2010, Rine earned two master's degrees – one in special education and another in educational leadership and has taught both special education and speech/theatre communication classes.

Among her awards, Rine was chosen the 2018 Arkansas National Speech and Debate Association District Coach of the Year and the 2020 Arkansas Communication and Theatre Arts Association Teacher of the Year.

Norm Rumsey
Chandler, Arizona

An English teacher for 27 years, Rumsey started the speech and debate program at Arizona College Prep High School in Chandler, Arizona, five years ago and has generated more interest every year. After starting with eight people five years, the ACP speech and debate team is now composed of 63 students only five years later.

Rumsey's speech and debate teams have enjoyed good success in Arizona Interscholastic Association (AIA) competition as well. Arizona College Prep was the AIA Division II runner-up in state speech and debate in 2018 and then was AIA Division II state champion in 2019.

Rumsey, who earned his bachelor's degree from Point Loma Nazarene University and his master's from Northern Arizona University, has also coached basketball at Arizona College Prep the past 22 years.

Michael Villacrusis
Rockingham, Virginia

Michael Villacrusis wears many hats as a teacher and coach at Turner Ashby High School in Bridgewater, Virginia. For his entire Turner Ashby tenure, Villacrusis – an educator of 32 years -- has went above and beyond just his role as an English teacher. He has taught debate since he arrived at the school in 2007. In 2010, Villacrusis took over as coach of the forensics team and then as the debate coach in 2016.

Involved in many areas, Villacrusis' contributions are abundant. As a coach, he has helped bring Virginia High School League (VHSL) district, regional and super regional tournaments for debate and forensics to Turner Ashby. Villacrusis has also since started an annual academic team banquet, in addition to launching the Turner Ashby Novice Forensics Tournaments and

Forensics Festival. Since 2012, he has acted as coach and school tournament director for the English-Speaking Union National Shakespeare Competition.

Villacrusis started his career in 1988 at Delaware Valley High School in Milford, Pennsylvania. While he boasts many personal achievements, including organizing the school's first Model UN team, his 13-year run at Turner Ashby has provided him many milestones. In 2012, he was named Turner Ashby's Teacher of the Year on top of winning his first of two (2019) AP Boxley McDonald's Student & Teacher Achievement Awards. The year 2019 also resulted in his selection as the Robert B. & Gladys Hopkins Strickler Honored Teacher of the Year. To date, Villacrusis also remains a member of Virginia Governor Ralph Northam's education roundtable.

Music Educator Award Bios

SECTION RECIPIENTS

Section 1

Anne Severy

Cornwall, Vermont

Anne Severy has been the band director at Middlebury Union High School in Middlebury, Vermont since 1986, and has held similar positions at Rutland (Vermont) Junior/Senior High School and West Rutland Schools dating to 1981. In addition to leading Middlebury Union's concert band, marching band and string and jazz ensembles, Severy gives instrumental lessons and teaches courses on music theory, music history and music composition.

Severy, who has guided the school's Jazz Ensemble to numerous first-place finishes and helped students earn spots in the National Honors Orchestra and Concert Band, has served as president, president-elect and past president of the Vermont Association for Jazz Education for the past six years. She also has longstanding memberships with the National Association for

Music Education (40 years); the Vermont Music Educators Association (VMEA) (40 years); the National Educators Association (39 years); the New England Music Festival Association (35 years); Green Mountain Music District V (35 years); and Vermont Unit 11 of the International Association of Jazz Educators (20 years).

In 2018, Severy was named Music Educator of the Year by both VMEA and Green Mountain Music District V, which previously awarded her the honor in 2006. She was also chosen as University of Vermont Teacher of the Year for Secondary Education in 2015.

Section 3

Lisa Clark

Ridgeland, Mississippi

Lisa Clark is the choral director for Madison Central High School (Grades 10-12) and Rosa Scott High School (Grade 9) in Madison, Mississippi. Prior to taking on her current roles, she directed choral music at several other Mississippi schools including Ridgeland High School, St. Joseph Catholic School, Neshoba High School, Neshoba Middle School and Holmes Community College.

Clark has mentored grand champions in multiple choral classifications and has led choirs to consistent “superior” ratings at district and state festivals, including “Best in Class” recognition at the Riverland Choral Festival. Madison Central’s notable performances under Clark’s tutelage include the Mississippi Governor’s Inauguration, the Mississippi House of Representatives, Mississippi Highway Patrol graduation and the state’s high school superintendents meeting. She has been a member of the Mississippi Professional Educators Association, the Mississippi Music Educators Association (MMEA) and the Mississippi American Choral Directors Association for more than 20 years and has served as chairperson and regional director of the Mississippi Distinguished Women during her 15 years of membership.

Clark was the 2019-20 recipient of the Mississippi High School Activities Association Outstanding Music Educator award and earned Mississippi Music Educator of the Year from the MMEA in 2010. She is also a past winner of the Governor's Power of One Award.

Section 4

Elizabeth Fritz

Decorah, Iowa

Elizabeth Fritz is a retired music educator who spent 28 of her 35 years in education teaching band programs for Decorah (Iowa) High School and Decorah Middle School. Prior to her retirement, Fritz was responsible for leading the fifth and sixth grade bands, woodwind lessons for grades 5-12, middle school jazz band and assisting with the high school band.

Fritz's pupils regularly scored "superior" ratings at festivals, and the Decorah Band Department was honored as an Exemplary Music Program by the Iowa Music Educators Association (IMEA) in 2009. Fritz is the creator of the Iowa "Model of Excellence" Mentoring Program for Young Arts Educators and the Tri-State Middle School Honor Band, which brings middle school musicians from Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin to perform together in Decorah. Among her professional leadership positions, Fritz has been president of the Iowa Bandmasters Association (IBA) and the Northeast Iowa Bandmasters Association (NEIBA), an administrator for the Music Mentors of Iowa, technology chair for the IMEA and a judge and auditor for the Iowa High School Music Association.

In 2014, the IBA recognized Fritz with the 30 Year Tenure Award and made her the first-ever female recipient of the Karl King Service Award in 2013. She received her first professional honor – the NEIBA Phillip Sehmman Excellence in Teaching Award – in 2004.

Section 5

Susan Laushman

Pittsburg, Kansas

Susan Laushman has spent much of her 35-year career in music education as the music teacher at Pittsburg (Kansas) High School, where she teaches vocal music, piano lab and music theatre. She has also been part of the music department staff at Pittsburg State University and worked as a vocal music teacher at Carl Junction (Missouri) High School.

Each year since 2010, 35 to 45 of Laushman's vocal students have been selected to the District Honor Choir, with 8 to 14 of them going on to the Kansas All-State Choir. She was also instrumental in developing Pittsburg's Multigenerational Choir, which played a large role in the high school being honored as a National School of Character. Laushman has been a member of the Kansas Music Educators Association and the Kansas Music Teachers Association (KMTA) for more than 15 years and served as the Southeast Kansas Representative of the Kansas Choral Directors Association from 2010 to 2017.

Her list of awards includes KMTA Outstanding Music Educator of the Year and Southeast Kansas Outstanding Music Educator honors in 2012, and Kansas Federation of Music Teachers Teacher of the Year and Pittsburg Unified School District 250 Globe Award recognitions in 2006. In 2016, the Pittsburg Chamber of Commerce named Laushman a Pittsburg Woman of Distinction.

Section 6

Wesley Singleton

Edmond, Oklahoma

Wesley Singleton is head of the vocal music department and a private voice instructor at Memorial High School in Edmond, Oklahoma. Prior to starting his position at Memorial in 2013, he was head of vocal music for Bartlesville (Oklahoma) Public Schools and Lone Grove (Oklahoma) Public Schools, and also served as Bartlesville's district fine arts supervisor.

Singleton has occupied many capacities for the Oklahoma Music Educators Association (OMEA) including president, vocal vice president, All-State Mixed Chorus chair, All-State Treble

Chorus chair and All-State Chorus Committee member, and has been part of the Oklahoma Secondary Schools Activities Association (OSSAA) Music Advisory Committee and Prescribed Music Selection Committee. He has helped many students earn places on the OMEA All-State High School Chorus and the Oklahoma Choral Directors Association All-State Jazz Chorus, and has consistently led concert choirs, soloists and ensembles to “superior” ratings at OSSAA festivals. He also currently serves as the National Association for Music Education Choral Council for Education Southwest representative.

Singleton was inducted into the OMEA Hall of Fame in 2015 and received the association’s Exemplary Music Educator honor in 2009. He was also named a Teacher of Today by the Edmond Rotary Club in 2018 and Lone Grove Public Schools Teacher of the Year in 2003.

Section 7

Mishy Kirby

Ogden, Utah

Mishy Kirby is in her 27th year as a music instructor at her high school alma mater – Bonneville High School (BHS) in Ogden, Utah. She currently teaches five different choirs, musical theatre and an advanced placement music class and is the musical director for Bonneville’s school musicals.

Kirby has been a member of six different professional organizations – including the National Association for Music Education, the American Choral Directors Association and the Utah Music Educators Association (UMEA) – since 1994. She is currently the UMEA’s choral vice president and previously served as All-State Choir chair and Choral Committee Member, and has been a Utah Ambassador of Music staff member since 1998. Kirby’s choirs and soloists routinely receive “superior” ratings at region and state festivals, and she has seen many of them selected to All-State Choir and State Honors Choir. Others have gone on to achieve honors at National Association of Teachers of Singing and National Federation of Music Clubs events.

Kirby is a sought-after adjudicator for Utah High School Activities Association sanctioned events and had the honor of directing the Utah State Ladies Choir in 2006. She was a 2008 recipient of Weber School District's "I Love Teaching Award" and has been named Bonneville High School's Teacher of the Month 15 times.

Section 8

Jennifer Brooks

Gresham, Oregon

Jennifer Brooks is the coordinator of music for David Douglas School District in Portland, Oregon, and previously was a music teacher and director of bands at David Douglas High School (DDHS) and Banks (Oregon) Junior and Senior High Schools.

Under Brooks' leadership, David Douglas High School became a powerhouse in several competitive divisions of the Oregon School Activities Association (OSAA). From 2010 to 2019, the school achieved six runner-up finishes and one third-place result in the Full Orchestra Division, five top-five finishes in the 6A Band Division and placed in the top five in the String Orchestra Division three times. Brooks has taken on a number of professional service commitments since 2010, including NFHS Music Committee chair and Music Committee Section 8 representative; Tri-M Music Honor Society advisor; Oregon Music Educators Association (OMEA) District II president, band chair and group manager for symphony, wind symphony, symphonic band and jazz band; Oregon Band Directors Association president; and OSAA Championships Committee and Activities Committee member and liaison to OMEA. She was also part of the Oregon Ambassadors of Music staff for five years.

Brooks received the Mary V. Dodge Award from the Portland Youth Philharmonic in 2013 and helped DDHS become a GRAMMY Signature School in 2011 and GRAMMY Enterprise Award winner in 2012.

STATE RECIPIENTS

Andy Davis

Darien, Illinois

For 16 years, Andy Davis has taught music at Reavis High School in Burbank, Illinois. While at Reavis, Davis has helped choral enrollment increase from 25 to more than 100, and band enrollment from 45 to more than 200. It has also added a string orchestra, a guitar curriculum, and a music production curriculum. His students have earned Division I ratings of superior at numerous festivals over the years, including the Illinois High School Association (IHSA) Organization Festival and the Midwest Music Festival.

Davis currently sits on the IHSA Music Advisory Committee and the IHSA Music Managers Committee, and he is a member of the National Association for Music Education. Davis has performed with numerous groups, including the Chicagoland Educator Orchestra, Windiana, the Tinley Park Community Band, and as a guest musician with the Air Force National Guard Band.

Davis earned his National Board Certification in 2017, and he was nominated for Grammy's Music Educator Award in 2014 (quarterfinalist) and again in 2020.

Douglas Elmore

New Albany, Indiana

For nearly 40 years, Douglas Elmore has served as the orchestra director of Floyd Central High School and Highland Mills Middle School, directing nearly 350 students in five orchestras. Under his direction, Floyd Central orchestras in total have earned over 50 Gold (Superior) awards at Indiana State School Music Association (ISSMA) festivals.

In addition to his duties with the Floyd County schools, Elmore recently served as conductor of the Floyd County Youth Symphony for 28 years, 24 as music director. Since 2017, Elmore has worked as the music director of the Louisville Youth Orchestra. He has also

adjudicated multiple ISSMA and Kentucky Music Educators Association (KMEA) festivals for both solo and ensemble and large organizations and served on multiple ISSMA committees.

Among his honors, Elmore earned a Teacher Creativity Grant from Eli Lilly in 1997. He also was named Floyd Central High School Teacher of the Year in 2011, was the Indiana ASTA High School Orchestra Director of the Year in 2014 and, in 2017, was a Grammy Music Educator Award Quarterfinalist

Daniel Eye

Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Daniel Eye is in his 11th year as director of bands for West Central High School in Hartford, South Dakota. His duties include directing the school's concert band, marching band, pep band, jazz band, drumline, percussion ensemble and musical pit.

Eye's bands at West Central have consistently earned top three finishes and is generally considered the top Class AA parade marching band in South Dakota. On three occasions, West Central's band has been invited to perform at the nation's oldest 4th of July parade in Bristol, Rhode Island.

Eye is a currently member of the South Dakota Bandmasters Association, the National Association for Music Educators and the South Dakota Music Educators Association, where he serves as Middle School Band chair. As chair, Eye coordinates all aspects of the Middle School Band festival weekend.

Since 2018, Eye has been a Yamaha Exclusive Artist and an Apple Certified Teacher, as well as a Vic Firth Endorsed Educator since 2007. He was also named West Central teacher of the year in 2016-17.

Becky Halliday

Helena, Alabama

Dr. Becky Halliday is an associate professor of music at the University of Montevallo (UM), where she administers courses in teacher preparation and music education. She also teaches elementary general music for pre-K through sixth grade students in Randolph, Alabama, and taught the same subject area in Georgia and Mississippi for 17 years while leading workshops and clinics throughout the Southeast.

Much of Halliday's work has been centered around The Kodály Concept, an interactive, collaborative and highly kinesthetic method of music education engineered to develop the core skills of musicianship. Halliday is the founding director of Montevallo's Kodály Institute and co-director of the university's Young Musicians' Camp, and currently serves as president of the Sweet Home Alabama Kodály Educators Chapter of the Organization of American Kodály Educators. She is a current member of the Council of General Music Education for the National Association for Music Education and is a past president of the Higher Education Division of the Alabama Music Educators Association (AMEA); and has published written works in state and national journals while serving on the Editorial Board for the Music Educators Journal.

Halliday is a past recipient of the University of Montevallo College of Fine Arts Distinguished Teacher Award, as well as the Lacey Powell Outstanding Music Educator Award for the AMEA.

Peggy Jeffries

Jonesboro, Arkansas

Peggy Jeffries is the band director at Nettleton High School in Jonesboro, Arkansas, and has overseen activities for the school's concert band and jazz band since 1999. Prior to her time at Nettleton, she was the band director at Blytheville (Arkansas) West Junior High School for six years.

Jeffries has led the Nettleton band to "superior" ratings in "concert" and "sight-reading assessment" categories for 21 consecutive years and has mentored a large collection of students to placement in honor bands, jazz bands, concert bands and chamber orchestras at the all-region and all-state levels. Since joining the Arkansas Bandmasters Association (ABA) and

the Arkansas School Band and Orchestra Association (ASBOA) in 1993, Jeffries has served both organizations in a variety of roles. She has been ABA vice president, secretary, treasurer and member-at-large; and Region V secretary, Region VIII chair and treasurer, and a member of three different state committees for the ASBOA. She has also been affiliated with the Arkansas Ambassadors of Music since 2001 and recently became part of the Delta Symphony Orchestra Guild in 2019.

For her leadership within the Jonesboro Alumnae Patroness Chapter of Sigma Alpha Iota – an international music fraternity – Jeffries has received honors such as the Sword of Honor, Rose of Honor and Recognition Pin for service.

Tim Libby

Denver, Colorado

Tim Libby is in his 21st year as director of bands at Cherry Creek High School (CCHS) in Greenwood Village, Colorado, and previously taught three years at Gateway High School in Aurora, Colorado.

Libby's bands have been selected 12 times to perform at state and national conventions, highlighted by a wind ensemble that played at the National Concert Band Festival in 2018 and two jazz bands that performed at the Colorado Music Educators Association Clinic/Conference as recently as 2017. The Cherry Creek marching band has placed first in its category multiple times while performing at the Denver Parade of Lights and has also recorded high finishes at regional festivals, including a second-place result in 2019. Libby is a past president of the Colorado Bandmasters Association and is a board member for Phi Beta Mu, an honorary fraternity for bandmasters. He has also previously served as interim director of the Lamont Wind Ensemble at the University of Denver and was a guest conductor at the Lebanese Band Association for the Promotion of Music International Summer Band Camp held in Beirut, Lebanon.

Libby was awarded Cherry Creek High School's Teacher of the Year honor in 2013, and, in 2015, was recognized as one of "50 Directors Who Make A Difference" by *School Band and Orchestra* magazine.

Wayne Millett

Aberdeen, Idaho

Wayne Millett became the music teacher at Aberdeen (Idaho) High School in 1990, and currently teaches band, choir, guitar, musical and stage crafts classes. Over his entire 38-year teaching career, which includes time spent at high schools and middle schools in Utah, Millett's students have been involved in more than 80 musical productions.

Millett has consistently guided Aberdeen bands to "superior" ratings at district festivals and from 2006 to 2019, led them to 10 first-place awards at various other events including the Music in the Parks Festival and the Gene Harris Jazz Festival. Millett has been very active at the state level throughout his career, serving as the Idaho Music Educators Association's (IMEA) overall president and president of its Fifth District, and webmaster; and has been a member of the Idaho High School Activities Association (IHSAA) Fifth District Board of Control. Nationally, he has been affiliated with the National Association for Music Education since 1983 and is a former member of the American Choral Directors Association.

Among his numerous accolades, Millett received the IMEA Distinguished Service Award and the IHSAA West Lowe Memorial Award in 2016; Idaho Fifth District Music Educator of the Year in 2002 and 2011; and Aberdeen School District Teacher of the Year in 2005.

Tyler North

Albuquerque, New Mexico

Tyler North has served New Mexico as a music educator for 19 years, teaching middle school and high school band, as well as music technology and music theory. As the director of bands at Sandia High School, he oversees the education and operation of two concert

ensembles, one jazz ensemble and a Steel (Pan) ensemble as well as the Matador marching and pep bands.

In his tenure at Sandia, North has significantly increased the student participation in the band programs through new initiatives, including creating a music technology lab as well as a Steel Ensemble in order to allow more students to experience music.

At the state level, North served as the New Mexico Music Educators Association (NMMEA) District VII President from 2014 to 2019 and has served on the Albuquerque Youth Symphony Board since 2017.

North earned the Sandia High School Inspirational Teacher Award in 2002 and 2019, and eight times honored with the Albuquerque Public Schools “Keys to Student Success” Commendation. In 2021, North was named Music Educator of the Year by the NMMEA.

Brian Reeves

Maryland Heights, Missouri

Brian Reeves began his teaching career in 1992 as choir director at Odessa Junior and Senior High School. In 1996, he moved to Parkway North High School where he has directed its choir since. In his 24 years at Parkway, he has led its choir to the highest rating of 1 at Missouri State High School Activities Association (MSHSAA) State Large Ensemble Festival each year.

Reeves has served terms as president of both the Missouri Music Educators Association and the Missouri Choral Directors Association, and from 2007 to 2019, he served on the MSHSAA Music Advisory Committee. In addition, last year Reeves was on the Selection Committee for Leadership Ballot of National Association for Music Educators Southwest Division.

Reeves has been honored with the Luther T Spayde Award by the Missouri Choral Directors Association, an Outstanding Music Educator Award by the St. Louis Suburban Music Educators Association, named Outstanding District Director by the Missouri Choral Directors Association and was Teacher of the Year of Parkway North High School.

Jenanne Solberg

Whitefish, Montana

Jenanne Solberg spent more than 30 years performing in various orchestras in Montana and Wyoming, during which she began her career as a music educator. In 1990, she started a string education program at Billings Central Catholic High School, eventually becoming the director of the choir and band programs. From 2002 until her retirement last year, Solberg taught music at the middle school level for Whitefish School District 44.

At Billings Central Catholic, the orchestra, band and choir earned Superior ratings at the District Music Festival each year of Solberg's tenure. Students from all ensembles were selected to All-State each year and two students selected to All-National Honors Orchestra. At Whitefish, Solberg created the orchestra program for fifth and sixth grade in 2003, which now includes 230 students. Whitefish students have been selected for All-State Orchestra every year, with several members represented at All-Northwest Honors groups as well.

Solberg has served as president of the Montana String Teachers Association and as vice president of the Montana Federation of Public Employees. In 2009, Yale named her one of the 50 Most Influential Music Teachers in the United States.

Burton Svendsen

Rushford, Minnesota

From 1978 until his retirement in 2016, Burton Svendsen influenced countless students in the Rushford (Minnesota) Public School District as band director for grades 5-12. In 1990, Rushford consolidated with the Peterson School District, which added direction of elementary bands to Svendsen responsibilities.

Throughout his tenure at Rusford, Svendsen's bands participated in the Minnesota Music Educators (MMEA) Celebration of Young Musicians program and, through Rochester, Minnesota's Civic Music, participated in a program that brought world music musicians into the public schools.

Svendsen was the music representative on the Region 1A board of the Minnesota State High School League for four years, including three as chair, and managed the large group music

contest for Region 1A for 14 years. Even in retirement, he has managed small group music contests for Region 1A, including three contests the past two years.

Erin Tapia

Baldwinsville, New York

Erin Tapia is the director of bands and Fine Arts Department Chair of Westhill High School, a position she has held since 2018 after 15 years as the associate director of bands. As director of bands, Tapia oversees the wind ensemble, concert band, jazz lab, Brazilian percussion ensemble, pep band, musical pit band and chamber music ensembles.

Under Tapia's direction, more than 75 students annually perform in the New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) Spring Solo and Ensemble Festivals, including multiple All-State student selections. More than 60 of Tapia's students have participated in instrumental collegiate music ensembles after graduating from Westhill, many who have pursued majors and careers in music education, music performance, audio production and engineering, stage management, and music therapy.

At the state level, Tapia is her zone representative for the NYSSMA and has served a term as the association's president. She is also the former chair of the New York State Band Directors Association Membership Committee.

In 2020, Tapia worked with the National Association for Music Educator's Mentor Training Program and has had performances with the Central Winds Music Educators' Wind Ensemble at the Midwest Clinic in 2009 and 2016, and the Texas Bandmasters' Association in 2019.

Kristen Thomas

Lisbon Falls, Maine

Kristen Thomas came to Mt. Ararat High School in Topsham, Maine, in 2007 as choral director. In 2012, she added drama club advisor to her list responsibilities before assuming duties as the school's Performing Arts Department Head in 2018.

Under her direction, the Mt. Ararat Chamber Singers earned Silver Awards at the Heritage/World Strides Festival in 2008, 2010 and 2012, and the Mt. Ararat Treble Choir achieved a Bronze Award in 2008 and Silver Awards 2010 and 2012. In addition, the Mt. Ararat Stage Company “Chicago: High School Editions” was earned a Broadway World Maine nomination for Best Educational Theater Performance in 2019.

At the state level, Thomas has served as chair for the Maine Music Educators Association All State Music Festival since 2013. In that capacity, she oversees the details of the festival that includes housing more than 500 students, 150 teachers and chaperones. After quickly switching the festival to a virtual format last spring, Thomas has been working to reimagine the 2021 festival into a meaningful virtual experience for students.

Bruce Walker

Richland, Washington

Since 2011, Bruce Walker has been the music director of the Yakima Youth Symphony. That follows eight years as director of orchestras in grades 6-12 for the Sunnyside School District. When he began at Sunnyside, the high school orchestra had five members. When Walker left in 2014, it numbered more than 120 students.

Under Walker’s direction, Sunnyside’s orchestra earned a gold medal at a festival in San Francisco in 2011 and a silver medal at Music in the Parks in 2009. In addition as a private cello instructor, Walker has had numerous students selected for Washington Music Educators Association (WMEA) state solo and ensemble.

Walker has served as site manager for the WMEA Chamber Orchestra and group manager for the WMEA All-state Orchestra five times each. He also currently sits on the Board of the Suzuki Association of the Americas and served as president of the American String Teachers Association for Washington.

Walker’s accomplishments include conducting orchestras in Nevada, Arkansas and Texas, and in 2018, he conducted the WMEA All-state Orchestra. Walker has also been guest conductor of the Yakima Symphony Orchestra and the Oregon East Symphony.

Del Whitman

Lincoln, Nebraska

Since 1986, Del Whitman has served as orchestra director of Lincoln East High School. During his tenure at the school, he has also directed the band and choir, and since 2000, been the Music Department Chair.

Under Whitman's direction, Lincoln East's orchestra has earned Superior ratings at every All-City and district contest since 1989, and more than 500 students have been selected for Nebraska Music Educators Association (NMEA) All-State Orchestra. Whitman has taught students who have gone on to play as members of professional orchestras in Chicago, San Francisco, Miami, Calgary, London, Omaha and Lincoln.

For the NMEA, Whitman has served two terms as chair of Orchestra Affairs, is a four-time session presenter and was a cello auditions revision consultant. He also served as president-elect of the Nebraska Chapter of American String Teachers Association in 1993-94.

Among Whitman's honors, he was named Nebraska Teacher of the Year in 1997 and 2015 by the American String Teachers Association.

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About the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)

The NFHS, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the national leadership organization for high school sports and performing arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and performing arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NFHS sets direction for the future by building awareness and support, improving the participation experience, establishing consistent standards and rules for competition, and helping those who oversee high school sports and activities. The NFHS writes playing rules for 17 sports for boys and girls at the high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches more than 19,500 high schools and 12 million participants in high school activity programs, including almost eight million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; offers online publications and services for high school coaches and officials; sponsors professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, speech and debate coaches, and music adjudicators; serves as the national source for interscholastic coach training; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS website at www.nfhs.org.

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