

Reynolds named first-ever Educator of the Month

By Aila Boyd

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Editor's Note: This article marks the first-ever Educator of the Month. The honor was created through a partnership between The Herald and Botetourt County Public Schools. Each month, educators throughout the school division have the opportunity to nominate a fellow educator for this honor. An educator, as defined for the purposes of this honor, is anyone who works in the school division and positively impacts the lives of students. Winners are selected based on who receives the most nominations. In order to be nominated, educators have to exhibit at least one of the following: support, high expectations, accountability, consistency, positivity, or grit. The Educator of the Month articles will appear in The Herald on the third Wednesday of every month.

Jane Reynolds has been educating Work and Family Studies students and advising the Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) chapter at Lord Botetourt High School for the past 29 years. During that time, many things have changed. Technologies have evolved. Her colleagues and students have come and gone. But one thing has remained constant— her passion for teaching.

Originally from New Jersey, Reynolds ended up studying to become a teacher in Ohio by happenstance. After receiving a rejection letter from her top choice of college, Reynolds' mother sent an application off to a college in Ohio on her behalf without informing her about it.

If her mother hadn't applied to the college for her, Reynolds said that she would have probably ended up going into taxidermy because she's good at sewing. But as it happened, she ended up deciding to go to the school in Ohio where she majored in family and consumer sciences.

After getting married, she moved to Virginia. Due to the difficulty she faced in finding a job, she decided to enroll in nursing school. To her surprise, she ended up landing a job teaching culinary arts after graduating from nursing school. "I had never used any of the equipment they had, so I was self-taught," Reynolds said, adding that she views herself as being a jack of all trades.

Seven years later, she accepted a position as a diabetic nutrition educator at a hospital. She then found her way to Botetourt County, where she has been ever since.

When considering the subject that she teaches, Reynolds said that she's glad she doesn't have to teach a Standards of Learning (SOL) subject because she's able to be more experimental in her teaching methods. Worksheets, she said, very rarely make appearances in her classroom. Instead, she relies heavily on hands-on activities. A lot of her students, she said, report that they end up working much harder in her class than they do in upper-level math, science, and English courses.

Additionally, Reynolds said that she enjoys instructing in Work and Family Studies because she gets to teach her students important life skills that they otherwise might not from their classes and daily lives.

As the result of her innovative teaching methods, she was asked to write the Family and Consumer Science curriculum for the state. The woman who is currently in charge of the curriculum for the subject matter had met Reynolds at various conferences and events and ended up extending the opportunity to her. She even has plans to be involved in a state-level curriculum writing session next month. “It keeps me current because we deal with business and industry, so they’re a part of the curriculum process as well,” Reynolds said.

Many awards and honors have come her way as the result of her dedication to her students, including being named a Master Teacher and a Master Adviser by FCCLA, and receiving the Spirit of Advising Award from FCCLA and a Community Builders Award from the Masonic Lodge. She noted that throughout her career, she has had 12 students become state FCCLA officers and two national FCCLA officers.

Through her position as adviser of Lord Botetourt’s FCCLA program, Reynolds said that she has been able to become very close to her students because of the fact that they have her as a teacher year after year. Especially poignant was when one of her former students became a Work and Family Studies teacher in her own right.

After an already lengthy and illustrious teaching career, Reynolds had a sort of epiphany several years back after finding herself frustrated and discouraged. Having noticed that things were falling through the cracks, she decided to “be the change” that she wanted to see. As a result, she ended up taking on a lot more responsibility at the school.

Now, she coordinates homecoming, blood drives, the Veterans Day program, the powderpuff game, Spirit Week, and the November food drive in conjunction with the National Honor Society. In addition to all that, she also does more programming during the spring semester.

Another initiative to show that she values the contributions of others are her “shout-out” cards, which are cards that she sends to students and teachers to recognize when they have “gone above and beyond.” She said, “All students need recognition to show that someone noticed the great thing that they’ve done.”

Looking ahead, Reynolds said that she still has a lot to offer students. Constantly changing her teaching methods, she said, “You can’t be stagnant and be a good teacher.”

When considering the thousands of students who she has taught throughout the years, Reynolds said most of them didn’t appreciate the wisdom that she imparted them with at the moment, but that many of them have ended up coming back to her years later and thanking her for what she said and did years earlier. “It’s gratifying to have them reach out later on,” she said.

After being notified that she had been selected for the Educator of the Month honor, Reynolds was visited by Superintendent of Schools Dr. Lisa Chen, who presented her with a certificate. Michael Beahm, School Board chairman, Jill Green, director of human resources, and Dr. Janet

Womack, assistant superintendent for instruction, also traveled to the school to congratulate Reynolds. They were accompanied by Bradley Nuckles, of Horace Mann, who provided Reynolds with a gift certificate to a restaurant.

Hoback declared October Educator of the Month

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Marie Hoback, the secretary and bookkeeper at Greenfield Elementary School, was declared the Educator of the Month for October.

Hoback has worked at Greenfield for over six years, and can't imagine being anywhere else. Each day, Hoback is one of the first staff members to arrive at Greenfield. She starts each and every morning by greeting the students and organizing transportation, before attending to the needs of her peers.

Greenfield Elementary serves a rapidly growing community. The school currently has 409 students. Hoback oversees not only the needs of the large student population and their families, but other staff members as well. Despite the large group which Hoback handles, she makes time to attend to the needs of each and every student.

Laura Camp, the principal of Greenfield Elementary, described Hoback as "the face of our wonderful school. She makes the main office a warm and inviting place to visit. Every student, teacher, parent, and visitor that enters the school office, immediately feels welcome. Mrs. Hoback is a very talented and kind individual. She is always willing to help others and dedicates much of her personal time. Our school community is beyond blessed to have her."

Superintendent of Botetourt County Public Schools Dr. Lisa Chen characterized Hoback as "kind and very knowledgeable. When you call on the phone, she sets the tone for the school by trying to be as helpful as she can. If she is unable to answer the question, she immediately looks up the answer without hesitation. She is a consummate professional, and she is there to serve."

Hoback is originally from Knoxville, Tenn., but has lived in Roanoke since the early 1980s. Switching to her current position was a major career change. Before Greenfield, Hoback worked in the medical and banking fields. She has always been involved with her two daughters' schools, which helped spark an interest in the education field. As soon as she saw the position at Greenfield open, she knew she had to apply.

“I’m very lucky because I have an opportunity to interact with not only our faculty and staff, but the parents and the children. Being able to interact with so many members of our Greenfield community, that’s what I enjoy the most,” said Hoback. “We’re a growing school, where the needs are increasing.”

Hoback considers herself very fortunate to be able to spend her workday at Greenfield. She said that she felt welcomed the moment she entered the building, and is looking forward to serving her community for many years to come.

“My focus is to make all families feel welcome, regardless of what their circumstances may be. My goal is to always make them feel that they are welcome here, and feel a part of the Greenfield family. To know, the moment they walk in the door, that they are loved, and cared for. Being here is a feeling I hope permeates throughout the building, and out into the community as well,” she said.

Buchanan named Educator of the Month for November

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Botetourt County Public School and The Herald’s Educator of the Month for November is Diane Buchanan. Buchanan was both shocked and surprised to win. “What do you say?” Buchanan said. “It’s just an honor to be nominated.” She is an instructional assistant at Eagle Rock Elementary School.

“Eagle Rock is a gem. A lot of people don’t realize we’re here. It’s a wonderful little school. There’s nothing like a small school. We know all the students. It’s a wonderful place. I love my school,” Buchanan gushed.

Buchanan not only has pride for her school, but her county as well. Having lived in Botetourt County all her life, Buchanan has a deep love for her home.

Before her 23 years of service at Eagle Rock Elementary, Buchanan worked in the county administration’s office. She worked in the administration’s office until she had her first child, and remained at home with her children until they were old enough to attend kindergarten.

There are no normal days for Buchanan, rather each day is filled with a new adventure, Buchanan noted.

“A normal day for me is just trying to get my students to be the best that they can be— going class-to-class working with the students, and giving them confidence and love,” explained Buchanan. She strives to create an environment for her students full of love, so that they will be more equipped to grow and learn.

Buchanan explained that a positive attitude makes all of the difference. “You have to come to work with a positive attitude and come work with a smile on your face. You need to be able to relate to the children on their level— get down on the floor with them,” she said. To understand the children she works with, Buchanan does her best to understand their perspective.

Superintendent Dr. Lisa Chen noticed Buchanan’s ability to relate to her students as well. “She takes the time to build personal relationships with students. She cares a great deal for all students and works extremely hard to support them academically and emotionally. She is a team player, a hard worker, and is extremely compassionate,” Chen said.

Buchanan noted that she couldn’t do her job to the best of her abilities without the aid of the teachers who surround her— “I can’t do my job without the teachers telling me what they need from me.” Collaboration is necessary to create the best possible program for her students.

Her favorite part of her job is when her students understand the material she is teaching. “When they finally get it, and they just look at you like ‘I finally get it now,’ that’s one of the best moments,” she said. Moments like these are what inspire Buchanan to continue her legacy at Eagle Rock Elementary, and the significant role she plays.

Hollandsworth named Educator of the Month for December

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Jeff Hollandsworth, a fourth and fifth grade math and science teacher at Troutville Elementary School, has been named the Educator of the Month for December.

A native of Henry County, Hollandsworth now lives in Daleville.

He obtained his undergraduate degree in accounting and business from Elon University. He subsequently moved to Richmond.

Originally, Hollandsworth didn’t know that he wanted to be a teacher. “I thought I wanted to pursue accounting and business,” he said. After college, he worked for several different corporations in Richmond. He eventually became a tax auditor for the state.

Due to his father's ill health, he decided to move to Roanoke, where he worked for the Virginia Employment Commission as a hearings officer. It was there that he met a man who was a retired principal. "He encouraged me to go into education," Hollandsworth said, adding that he told the man that he thought he was "crazy." Despite Hollandsworth's reluctance to take the man's advice, he continued to urge him to consider a career in education.

Hollandsworth finally decided to consider what a career as an educator might look like, so he took an education class. "The minute I walked in there I realized that it was where I was supposed to be," he said.

From there, he started taking graduate-level education courses at Virginia Tech while still working full-time.

His first teaching position was in Roanoke City, where he remained for 10 years.

He has taught in Botetourt for the past 15 years.

"I try to incorporate a lot of fun, laughter, and positivity into my teaching," he said. "My purpose beyond the curriculum includes core values like character, soft skills, and even chivalry, which is a lost art. All of those things are paramount to being successful. You need to know how to look someone in the eye and shake their hand."

Hollandsworth cautions those who are interested in going into teaching to be ready for challenges. With that being said, he stressed that the satisfaction of knowing that he has made an impact on the lives of so many students has easily outweighed any downsides to the profession in his eyes. "If you have a special bond or relationship with students, then you can make a difference," he said.

"Mr. H, as his kids call him, is about kids and learning. He is incredibly creative and gets students involved in activities that are thought provoking and highly engaged. His enthusiasm inside the classroom is infectious! Kids walk by and they can't wait to go inside," Steven Anderson, principal of Troutville Elementary School, said.

Dr. Lisa Chen, the superintendent for Botetourt County Public Schools, said of Hollandsworth, "He is kind, supportive, and always there for students. His colleagues completely agree with his positivity and his love and passion for teaching!"