

Edmonton Public Schools'
DIVISION RECOGNITION
2019–20

HONOURS
AND REWARDS
FALL TO THOSE
WHO SHOW THEIR GOOD
QUALITIES
IN ACTION. — ARISTOTLE



Message from the Board of Trustees

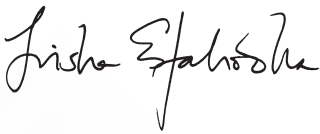
For more than two decades, the Division Recognition Program has highlighted the outstanding efforts of students, parents, community members and staff. The Board of Trustees would like to congratulate you for being nominated for a Division Recognition Award.

You may be familiar with the stories of some of the individuals we're recognizing this year, perhaps having seen or read about them in the news. Other stories will reveal the quiet, behind-the-scenes work happening every day in schools and offices across our Division.

This year's nominees all share a common set of qualities, exemplifying the true spirit of public education. In our classrooms, you bring an energy and enthusiasm that encourages students to realize their potential; in our many offices and school communities, you support, motivate, guide and inspire colleagues, peers, students and parents to strive for excellence.

Your efforts have far-reaching and long-lasting impacts. The passion, talent and dedication you bring to our Division make a true difference in the lives of our students and their families.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to thank each of you for your service to, and continued support of, our Division. We are so fortunate to have such a fantastic group of individuals who are dedicated to Edmonton Public Schools.



Trisha Estabrooks
Board Chair

Edmonton Public Schools benefits greatly from the considerable contributions made by students, staff, parents and community members. Many people volunteer time, talent and energy that not only exceeds our expectations, but also sets an example for others to follow.

These outstanding achievements and important contributions to Edmonton Public Schools are recognized through the annual Division Recognition Program. There are three types of Division Recognition:

RECOGNITION OF SERVICE honours an individual's outstanding professional and/or volunteer contributions to the life of the school or community. Three recipient categories are recognized each year: parents or community members, students in Grades 7 to 12 and staff members. Nominations are made based on a number of criteria, such as: quality service, commitment and the relationship of the individual's activities to schooling and/or the enhancement of public education.

RECOGNITION OF TEAMS honours outstanding contributions or achievements made by groups through collaborative efforts. Three recipient categories are recognized each year: groups of parents or community members, groups of students in Grades 7 to 12 and groups of staff members. Nominations are made based on a number of criteria, such as: significant contribution, the achievement of excellence through teamwork and the relationship of the group's activities to schooling and/or the enhancement of public education.

RECOGNITION OF MERIT honours outstanding achievement of individuals who have demonstrated a standard of excellence in an area of endeavour. Three recipient categories are recognized each year: parents or community members, students in Grades 7 to 12 and staff members. Nominations are made based on a number of criteria, such as: meritorious, innovative, creative or inspiring achievements, leadership and/or endeavours that have brought distinction to the individual, the school, the community and Edmonton Public Schools.

Recognition of Service

CRITERIA: *To recognize the contributions made to the Division by parents, community members, students in Grades 7 to 12, and staff through professional and volunteer service. Focus is on quality service and significant commitment to the life of the school and/or the education community by an individual.*

STAFF

Phillip Palmer, Afton School

Phillip has left his mark at Afton School. As the Librarian Technician, Phillip took his role to the next level to make reading fun and interesting for every student. Nicole Lucier-Halliday, an Educational Assistant at Afton School, says, “Mr. Palmer has made such a positive impact at our school. He always has a smile on his face and conducts himself with genuine kindness in everything he does. He goes above and beyond to assist students and staff with anything they need.”

Phillip’s lasting legacy at Afton School is starting the Afton Book Club. Phillip created this unique club to provide a leadership opportunity for students at the school and create a love of reading for all. “My daughter’s love for books was born when she joined the club. She was always happy to help in the library and pick books that suited her interests. Mr. Palmer was always there to help and guide students to foster their love of reading,” says Lina Dimgailaite, a parent at Afton School.

Besides his work as the librarian technician, Phillip also helped staff at the school by creating resources for staff to use, like converting old VHS resources into formats that can be used in the classroom, cataloguing and organizing technology at the school, and creating posters for school events. Phillip also dedicated significant time to planning and executing events for the entire school community, including a special graduation ceremony for the Grade 6 students in June 2020.

Recognition of Service *continued*

Chelsea Robbins, Balwin

From her first day of teaching at Balwin School, Chelsea Robbins has become an integral part of the school and greater community. Armed with a strong work ethic and deep sense of connection to her students, she stepped up in a big way when in-person classes were cancelled. “COVID-19 did not slow Chelsea down. She took the challenge and quickly recognized the devastating impact school closure would have on our highly socially vulnerable community,” says Andrew Connelly, Assistant Principal of Balwin School.

She connected with families to understand any barriers they were dealing with and recognized the need for food security and access to technology. “Chelsea’s hard work erased that overwhelming feeling and helped our community adjust and adapt to a new reality,” says Sarah Ferrante, a Grade 6 Teacher at Balwin School.

She helped grocery shop, build and deliver food hampers twice a month for families in need, continuing this work into the summer months. Chelsea also organized a Chromebook lending system to give students equitable access to at-home learning and make it easy for them to stay connected to teachers and fellow students. Balwin School also received a generous and much-needed donation of Chromebooks after Chelsea applied for various grants on the school’s behalf.

Teacher Chanelle Cluett-Alstad says, “She rose to the occasion and supported our entire school with something that was needed desperately in order to provide any opportunity for our students to learn.”

Because of her actions, Balwin School was able to offer high-quality teaching and learning and a sense of security for many families through a crisis.

Ronelo Marcos, Britannia School

As the Head Custodian at Britannia School, Ronelo has an important role in keeping the school clean and safe. It’s not just his commitment to his job that makes staff, students and parents take notice—it’s also his pride for his school community and the way he interacts with everyone each day. “Ronelo is a smiling face in the hallway each day that makes students and staff feel welcome. He has a great sense of humour and engages with students every day. He’s a very positive role model,” says Teacher David Sewell.

Ronelo is credited with keeping Britannia School in impeccable shape. As an older building that opened in 1957, many of the components are still original parts, which is a testament to the care and work Ronelo does to ensure the school is well-maintained.

In addition to keeping the school in tip-top shape, Ronelo actively supports staff with setting up furniture, technology and anything else they need to support events at the school.

Principal Jason Smith says, “Ronelo makes it possible for staff and students to function in an outstanding work environment. Ronelo actively participates in school-wide events and goes above and beyond our expectations. He is an integral component of our school community and someone that people look forward to seeing at the start of a new school day.”

Jefferson Alves, Dr. Donald Massey

As a school Custodian, Jefferson is dedicated to making sure students have a safe and clean environment to learn in. He puts his all into his work and is truly dedicated to students. In his own words: “I’m here for the kids. If I wasn’t here for the kids, I might as well go back to my old job working with sheet metal.”

His commitment to students shines through every single day. Jefferson greets the students with hand sanitizer spray each morning and knows most of them by name, despite being in a school of 1,000. This ability to connect with each individual student allowed him to help a student who was nervous about his first day of school during the COVID-19 pandemic. A few kind words and a genuine connection with Jefferson allowed the student to feel safe and welcome. By the end of the day, the student was grateful for Mr. Alves taking the time to talk to him and walk him to his classroom.

Moments like this are why Jefferson is often the first adult students seek out when they need advice, support or a good laugh. Dr. Donald Massey School is richer for having Jefferson working there. In the words of Principal Cheryl Belyea, “He treats each student as if they are his own, committed to removing barriers that stand in their way of achieving success. The beauty is, he is so focused on supporting others he is unaware of the scope of the impact he has.”

Yena Chung, Dr. Lila Fahlman

Lunch Supervisor Leader Yena Chung brings calm to the chaos. With her walkie-talkie always in hand, Yena is credited with coming up with quick solutions daily to keep things in order over the lunch period.

“Yena comes early each day to make sure everything is covered and every detail is in order before the rest of her team arrives. She can be reached anytime through her walkie-talkie and moves quickly throughout our entire campus when called on for assistance. Yena lives our cornerstone values of integrity and accountability each day with the service she provides for all our students,” says Principal Bryan Evans.

Yena’s colleagues credit her organizational skills, attention to detail and ability to smooth things over to helping reduce stress for the rest of the supervision team. Fellow lunch supervisor Sandra Sands says, “Yena’s kind and supportive attitude with the students is simply in her nature. Whether she is gathering 90 active Grade 1 students into a controlled line-up with her trademark Barbie microphone and cheer songs, or making a rowdy classroom calm, Yena’s ingenuity and efficiency is apparent.”

But more than this, it’s Yena’s dedication to each and every student in the school that has a big impact on the school community. In addition to leading the lunch supervision team, Yena also volunteers regularly in the school.

Grade 4 Teacher Mawish Sabal says, “Yena’s ability to connect with the students and be a positive role model is truly inspirational. Her engagement and involvement with students in my classroom have improved their reading skills, encouraged them and made them feel capable and successful. Yena encouraged her fellow colleagues to volunteer and become part of the school community, and she helps to create a safe and caring environment in our school.”

Recognition of Service *continued*

Gord Flatt, Fraser

Gord Flatt may be the closest thing to a superhero in the eyes of the Fraser School community. In his almost 35 years at the school, he has shown extraordinary commitment to his duties as Head Custodian and to getting to know every student who comes through the doors.

In winter snowfalls, families know they will arrive at school to cleared and salted walkways. “If that meant Gord would be in early to get it done, well he was there early without miss. Safety has always been a concern for Gord,” says Fraser School parent Julie Aloisio.

When schools re-opened during the pandemic, Gord worked even harder to exceed the new cleaning and sanitization standards. “When our school was notified that we had our first positive COVID-19 case, Gord could not sleep that night. He was so worried about our school population that he headed into the school at 4 a.m. so that he could start deep cleaning and sanitizing,” says Michelle K. Preston, an Educational Assistant at Fraser School. This dedication to a clean and safe school has been especially important making families feel comfortable sending their children back to in-school learning.

In his many years at Fraser School, Gord has volunteered in his spare time to help with events like hot lunches, school dances and even community events. “Gord Flatt is more than a custodian. He is the heart of Fraser School,” says Jessika denOtter, President of the school’s fundraising society. “I know Gord cares about every student, every staff member and every volunteer that walks through the doors of Fraser School.”

Wafa Razkalla, Glengarry

Thanks to Wafa, music is an important part of the school culture at Glengarry. She makes sure to connect her music lessons with whatever is happening in the school community. She arranges sing-alongs to help mark important holidays like Christmas, Eid and Halloween. Last year, when in-person classes were cancelled due to COVID-19, Wafa arranged an online, at-home, weekend sing-along for Eid to make sure students didn’t miss out on this tradition. She did the same again for Halloween this year, as large group performances continue to be a challenge. Last year, she also arranged an online talent show to help the students stay connected as a community and to see them off for the summer.

She is always willing to lend a hand to her colleagues. This year, especially, Wafa is being flexible with her time and making herself available during her empty time slots, providing literacy interventions and support through music, so other teachers can have extra prep time. All of this is in addition to having adapted to teaching music from a cart that she moves from classroom to classroom, floor to floor.

Wafa’s dedication to teaching music and Arabic culture is inspiring, as is her devotion to her students and colleagues. To quote fellow Teacher Rana Shawar, “What makes Wafa so remarkable is that she does all of this with the utmost grace.”

Elma Harder, Grace Martin

Elma Harder is the visionary leader behind the Sakinah Circle program, which has been an important program for Muslim families in our city. Elma helped to bring it to Argyll Centre as a pilot program in 2007, and in 2010, the Board of Trustees voted in favour to establish it as an official alternative program at Grace Martin School.

“Over the years, Elma has been a strong pillar of support and inspiration for the success and growth of the Sakinah Circle program. She worked with students, teachers, staff, parents and community members to create a holistic learning environment that addresses students’ academic, creative, and spiritual growth,” says Assistant Principal Siraj Hussain-Ahmed.

Elma also had an important role in helping establish an outdoor learning space at Grace Martin School through the Toyota Evergreen Learning Grounds grant. Elma worked with students and staff to envision a unique outdoor learning space and make it a reality in 2015. To this day, students and staff continue to use the space and fill the school gardens each year.

“Elma’s dedicated service to public education has transformed the lives of hundreds of students and families, and her meritorious vision renewed and brought life to the school,” says Zainab Basheer, Teacher in the Sakinah Program at Grace Martin School.

Joy Derder, Hilwie Hamdon

Joy is a Custodian at Hilwie Hamdon. Joy is a positive person with a contagious smile. Principal Dorothy Arts says, “Joy works very hard, especially during COVID-19 times, and her hard work is very much appreciated.”

Joy’s recognition was sparked last year when a group of language arts students were tasked to pick three people they didn’t typically interact with or show appreciation to. A group of students gravitated to Joy. As they began to talk to her and pay attention to everything she did for them and their overall school community, they began to realize how valuable she was and what an amazing person she was. In fact, one student shared that they began to dread each time they had to leave their visits.

What also became very clear to students was how much care Joy took in creating a sanitized, safe and attractive environment for the students and staff. Students realized they didn’t know what they’d do without Joy around.

Students said, “Joy is such a wonderful human being and hopefully she realizes how much we appreciate her existence.”

Recognition of Service *continued*

Vickey Gamache, Horse Hill

For the past 11 years, Horse Hill School's Head Custodian Vickey Gamache has been at the helm of keeping the school's hallways, classrooms and facilities in pristine condition. On top of this, Vickey and her team have worked incredibly hard to prepare the school and ensure all safety strategies are in place for the COVID-19 Division Re-entry Strategy to keep students and staff safe.

"Vickey's love and commitment to our school is personified in all aspects of her interaction with students, staff, and community members. Always with a smile on her face, she consistently goes above and beyond to ensure our facility is well taken care of, our kids have the cleanest and safest learning environment, and our families trust in the measures put in place to keep their kids safe," says Principal Nouha El-Ali.

Aside from her role as Head Custodian, Vickey also sits on a number of school committees to help enrich students' lives and is known for putting together an impressive haunted house for the community to enjoy at Halloween.

"Vickey takes part in many of our instructional committees and has shaped the culture of our school. She has created a place at Horse Hill that is beautiful, clean, up to date, and most importantly, full of love," says Tim Hulyk, Teacher at Horse Hill School.

Fran Stockard, Horse Hill

Fran is known in the Horse Hill School community as Grandma Fran. School and community members young and old look to her as a grandmother figure—a role she has taken with pride. Through her work as an educational assistant and countless volunteer hours, Grandma Fran provides students with social and emotional support, as well as academic support.

Fran is also the school librarian, and it is this work for which she is best known. Her passion for literacy and learning has inspired her to create a library that is truly the heart of the school. It is warm and welcoming, and Fran makes sure teachers and students alike have the resources they need for academic success. Her passion for the library and the amazing READ IN Week events she organizes in the school have inspired a love of reading in Horse Hill students for more than 12 years.

In honour of Fran's incredible work, Principal Jacqueline Pocklington declared a space in the school as "Grandma Fran's Reading Nook." Her legacy will continue on in the lives of the many staff and students she has served over the years, and the creation of the reading nook means her legacy will live on for generations to come.

Suzanne Khaled, Kensington School

Suzanne Khaled can best be described as a doer. In her four years as an educational assistant at Kensington School, she's captured the hearts of the staff and students with her warm demeanor, enthusiasm and skilled way with students.

One of her many strengths is her willingness to jump in when help is needed, whether for supervision or one-on-one student support. "There is no job that she cannot do or will not do," says Dao Haddad, Principal of Kensington School. "Students absolutely love Suzanne and they smile so big when she is around."

Suzanne is also the school's resident Arabic interpreter, fostering vital communication channels and relationships in a school with a large Arabic-speaking population. Her focus on building connections with every student and family builds a strong sense of trust, safety and support in the school. "She understands students' needs and builds relationships quickly with some of our most struggling students," says Shauna Shore, Assistant Principal of Kensington School.

Especially in the last year, Suzanne's compassion and ability to pivot has shone through. "Her flexibility and willingness to work with all students and staff ensures the needs of all Kensington students are met," says Brenda Wildeboer, Administrative Assistant at Kensington School.

Ann Blakely, Lynnwood

Ann has been Lynnwood School's beloved librarian for more than 15 years. Described by colleagues as a "trailblazer" and "walking Wikipedia," Ann has inspired the love of reading in students, teachers and the community alike. Colleague Denice Gubersky says, "Ann has spent countless hours finding ways to get books into the hands of people in the Dovercourt community. She organizes book fairs, puts together short stories to supplement teaching units and shares titles she thinks teachers will enjoy personally."

When she's not sharing her love for books and reading, Ann dedicates her time to community service. She helps organize the school's Terry Fox run each year, participates and helps organize extracurricular activities at the school and sits on the board of directors for a seniors' organization.

Ann has also had a huge part in collecting resources and books to support the Mandarin Bilingual Program at Dovercourt School. "Resources are often limited for bilingual programs, and Ann is always keeping an eye out for new books and resources for teachers in the Mandarin Bilingual Program to use," says fellow Teacher Lisa Yip.

"Ann has re-instilled the love of reading and inspired me. She has encouraged reading and captured the imagination of each student who has crossed her path in the past 28 years," says Urmela Scarlett, Lynnwood School's Librarian Technician.

Recognition of Service *continued*

Ray Balboa, Malmo

Head Custodian Ray Balboa has worked at Malmo School for more than 15 years. Known for his leadership, hard work and good sense of humour, Mr. Balboa is at the heart of Malmo's school community.

Principal Fatima Dayoub says, "Ray makes Malmo School a home to everyone because he cares for it like it's his own. Many students have fond memories of the monthly Golden Garbage and Golden Boot award, which was given out to the class with the best effort to keep their classroom and boot racks tidy, clean and safe. Students were proud to show off this award in their classroom."

Ray worked tirelessly this year to prepare the school for students to return in September. Ray and his staff made sure repairs got done, prepared the school and got everything in place to ensure safety procedures for the Division Re-entry Strategy were in place before the first day of classes.

Teacher Theresa Bonar says, "Ray is constantly solving problems, moving things and keeping our building safe, all while cracking jokes and having fun. Ray likes to joke around with the students, who all have a connection with him. He excels at his job and makes coming to school enjoyable and safe."

In the winter, you'll find Ray at the school before anyone else, shovelling walks and preparing the school for staff and students before the day begins. He's often outside to make sure he's greeting students and staff when they arrive in the morning.

"Mr. Balboa is considered the true gatekeeper of our school. He understands the language of our school's walls more than anyone else, and he is essential to our school community," says Teacher Mariam Ali.

Chandra Prasad, Malmo

Chandra has been working at Malmo School for more than 18 years. During that time, she has become known as a source of kindness and exceptional leadership in the school community. As Assistant Custodian, she not only makes sure the school is clean and safe for everyone, she also develops life-long relationships with students and families. Former students often come to visit her because she has had such a positive impact on their lives.

Whether looking for a kind word, a good laugh or fresh produce from her garden, students and staff alike will turn to Chandra to brighten their day.

Chandra's strong work ethic is well known among her colleagues, and she has gone to new heights in this time of COVID-19. She worked closely with the head custodian over the summer to make sure the school met all the new health and safety requirements, and she continues to excel at her work. In the words of Teacher Mariam Ali, "Ms. Prasad is like a fairy who magically transforms the school at night for the next day. It amazes me when I think about how endless her love is for this place when a lot of times she doesn't even get to watch the school's magic during the day. Ms. Prasad never gets to watch the students' glee and the shine in their eyes every morning when they come to class, but I hope she knows she makes a difference."

Joey Young, Oliver

Joey started at Oliver School more than 30 years ago. Starting as a daycare staff member, Joey worked in several different roles throughout the years and is currently Administrative Assistant at the school. During her time at the school, she's become the heart and soul of the school community, obtaining valuable perspective and knowledge.

"Joey is our go-to person for everything. She seems to magically know how to respond in the most thoughtful and logical manner. When left in her capable hands, everything is looked after promptly," says Teacher Sherri Rudyk.

Beyond her invaluable experience and knowledge of the school community, you'll always find Joey contributing to the school in any way she can. Joey works tirelessly and jumps in with both feet to help plan, prepare and execute school events like meet the staff nights, open house events, welcome back barbecues and more.

"Joey is a unifying force in our school community, always serving the needs of our students, staff, families and community members," says colleague Dawn Fowlie. "Joey's always the first one to roll up her sleeves and is at the heart of every event at our school."

Kelsey Duduman, Queen Elizabeth

In her six years as Fashion Studies Teacher at Queen Elizabeth School, Kelsey has consistently shown her students how to pursue a passion and also make an impact beyond the classroom. She works tirelessly—and recruits many of her willing family members—to ensure her students have fabric, sewing machines and enough encouragement and inspiration to last a lifetime. "There is no teacher that 'hustles' more for their program. It is not uncommon to see bins of fabric or donated sewing machines being dropped off in the office for Kelsey's program," says Brenda Scaddan, retired Assistant Principal.

In every project, she considers how to teach her students the skills they need and incorporate the community. When COVID-19 hit in the spring, Kelsey and her students made and sold reusable masks, donating the more than \$2,000 they raised to the Mustard Seed. "Kelsey has taken the concept beyond our school and has provided our students an opportunity to actively participate in serving others," says Trisha Shepherd, Department Head of Career and Technology Studies at Queen Elizabeth.

Since then, Kelsey has continued to make reusable masks with her sister, selling them to raise funds for charitable causes and organizations. "Kelsey provides opportunities for students to see what life looks like beyond school and models how we can always give back to our community," says Lisa Beebe, Assistant Principal at Queen Elizabeth.

Recognition of Service *continued*

Cassandra Troughton, Sherwood

It takes a big heart to change lives, and that's exactly what Cassandra has done for the families at Sherwood School. As Educational Assistant at the school, Cassandra's contributions to the community extend way beyond the walls of the classroom. She's championed several mental health and physical activity initiatives at the school that have been life-changing for students and staff.

"Cassandra's role as educational assistant and the care and support she provides to students in the Opportunity Program alone are worthy of an award," says Robert Smilanich, Principal of Sherwood School. "But where Cassandra truly distinguishes herself is in the broader contributions she's made to the community through initiatives she's started that promote healthy living, physical activity and positive mental habits."

Recognizing that many students at the school don't have access to supports and extracurricular activities outside of school, Cassandra spearheaded several initiatives to bring physical and mental supports to students at the school. These activities include: starting the Mindfulness Club, reaching out to external partners to bring in new games and activities for students at recess and establishing an intramural program for students at recess. Cassandra also organized COVID-safe physical activities for staff last spring to help relieve some stress during a difficult time.

Teacher Dayna Serediak says, "Cassandra implements programs that directly impact students and staff to help them thrive and goes way beyond her job description. She is always willing to learn, grow and be better. Cassandra is a true leader in every way."

Nick Nikolaou, Technology and Information Management

Nick Nikolaou, Technical Analyst at Hillview School, is known by staff as an expert problem-solver and genuinely helpful person. Nick's colleagues describe him as patient, quick to respond and always willing to go above and beyond. "His demeanor is friendly and approachable, so we never hesitate to ask all the computer-related questions we have," says Anita Maxwell, Speech-Language Pathologist at Hillview School.

This last year, he supported and educated staff in the transition to at-home teaching and set up an application to help the speech-language pathology team make the most of their time with students. "Nick goes above and beyond to teach us about technology. This was especially valuable to our school team this spring when the pandemic hit and we all had to figure out how to work from home," says Sharon Willms, Speech-Language Pathologist Consultant at Hillview School.

Nick's work with the speech-language pathology team at Hillview School has had a positive impact not only on staff, but the students who need their support. "Many of the children we work with are non-verbal and really rely on technology to communicate with others. While we know how to use and model the iPads and apps with our Pre-K children, Nick has played a huge part in allowing us to bring that technology into the classroom," says Clayton Wilson, Speech-Language Pathologist at Hillview School.

Ryan Saulou, Technology and Information Management

Steele Heights staff have felt fortunate to have Ryan as their technology and information management consultant for the past eight years and credit him for helping staff at the school pivot to online learning last spring.

“Last year, I wanted to improve my online presence and prepare for the unknown,” says Steele Heights Teacher Jessica Petrov. “Ryan came into my classroom and helped organize hardware to make sure I could teach online. He shared hints and ideas with me to make sure I was able to support students on a variety of devices, which was a complete success.”

Ryan helped staff expand their technology knowledge and skills by providing hands-on learning support. Staff credit Ryan for his ability to explain things in easy-to-understand terms and going the extra mile to help out and solve problems.

In addition to his work at the school, Ryan also volunteers for the school’s ski/board club. He’s even helped supervise on trips the club has taken to the mountains for the last six years.

Eve Dewart, Westlawn

Eve is described by her peers as an enthusiastic, positive and compassionate teacher. Eve’s expertise in science and physical education along with her ability to make everyone feel included and valued, make her an important part of the school community.

Eve goes above and beyond for students and staff at Westlawn School. Whether it’s setting up field trips and guest speakers for the whole school to experience, or organizing team-building activities for all staff to participate in, her dedication and care for her students and colleagues alike is evident.

As Physical Education Teacher, Eve teaches students with complex physical and communication needs in the Individual Support Program (ISP). She sets goals that are personally relevant and appropriate for each student’s emotional and physical development, and incorporates meaningful activities to meet these goals.

Eve brings innovative and creative approaches to teaching physical education in the ISP classroom while encouraging students to participate to the best of their ability. Her students in the ISP classroom play integrated games with other classes and Eve developed personalized workout plans for students to focus on gross motor skills with the help and support from other teachers, educational assistants, volunteers and administration staff.

“Her patience and passion for students is admirable and authentic,” says Teacher Shannon Paul.

Eve has coached basketball, slowpitch, cross-country running and volleyball and was awarded the Coach of the Year award. In addition to competitive sports, Eve was also the program lead for an all-girls “Run for its Club”, designed to support mental health through running. In her time at Westlawn School, Eve has also been the Gay-Straight Alliance lead and ran an after-school art club.

Parent and educational assistant Rula Khanfar says, “Eve is very important to our community. When I remember Eve, I feel happy and motivated, and I am sure that all who know Eve feel the same.”

Recognition of Service *continued*

Linda Toal, Windsor Park

For the past 13 years, Linda has taught nearly every grade level at Windsor Park and contributed countless hours to extracurricular clubs and activities. Linda's peers and parents at the school commend her for inspiring the love of reading for all students at the school and for always finding unique ways to engage and inspire students.

"Mrs. Toal is light that shines through our children's learning," says Siminder Soin, a parent of a Grade 5 student at Windsor Park School. "She finds unique ways to motivate students to strive for excellence and is always there to celebrate their achievements. The effort she brings to everything is contagious."

Linda has a very active role in helping out with the school's cross-country running and track teams. She's the first to step up when it comes to organizing ceremonies like Remembrance Day and farewell celebrations. Last year, she organized a drive-through graduation ceremony for Grade 6 students during the COVID-19 pandemic to make sure the students were able to celebrate and say farewell to school staff.

Maria Reddy, another Windsor Park parent, says, "Mrs. Toal truly stands out as a teacher who goes above and beyond to make a positive difference in her students' lives inside and outside of school. She is an exemplary role model who demonstrates leadership, compassion and dedication to her work and students."

PARENT/COMMUNITY

Kaitlyn Unruh, Delton

For many years, Kaitlyn has provided continuous and unwavering support of the Delton school community as a volunteer, bus driver, and recently, as consistent support for online learning throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Her dedication and commitment to our students is truly exceptional,” says Principal Christine Simmons. “It is clear she goes the extra mile in support of our students.”

Kaitlyn has put a lot of effort into the relationships she has with students, staff and families. As a bus driver, she knows every student’s and their parent or guardian’s name and their interests. These genuine connections help make for a positive bus ride for everyone. As a volunteer, she’s always willing to support school activities, whether it’s attending field trips or driving students home after the weekly Running and Reading program. Last spring, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit and students were moved to at-home learning, Kaitlyn rose to the challenge of supporting each of her own four children, as well as school staff.

“There is something to be said about parents who help bridge the gap between school and home,” says Grade 5 Teacher Amy Summers. “These parents who are helpful, present and involved are the best gifts a teacher can be given; Kaitlyn Unruh is one of those parents.”

Julie Rohr, Forest Heights

Julie is a kind, personable and joyful person who was an amazing volunteer at Forest Heights for seven years. Teacher Karin Konkin says, “She drew people together to enhance our school and community culture.”

As a volunteer and member of the school council, she juggled work, family and personal health challenges to eagerly lead, help co-ordinate and organize numerous projects such as Oktoberfest, Community Christmas, the Teacher Appreciation Lunch, a Cookie Walk fundraiser and the Spring Fling family event. Julie could also be found reading with students, volunteering in the library, and assisting with numerous field trips, at photo days and at book fairs. Her passion for learning sparked interest in students and she always went the extra mile to help students experience success.

Julie revamped the school yearbook. She tackled this project with flair and great design. She always made it extra special for students by inviting them to submit art. One lucky student got to have their art on the yearbook cover while the rest of the art was then included in the yearbook.

“The joy she finds in selflessly investing in the lives of others radiates to each and every individual who has the privilege of knowing her,” says Principal Nicole Schmidt. “The more she gives, the brighter she shines. We’ll be forever grateful for all the sunshine she has brought to our ‘forest’ at Forest Heights School.”

Recognition of Service *continued*

Christine Hrudey, Lynnwood

Christine is an invaluable part of the Lynnwood School community, but “her most significant contribution has been her advocacy for students with autism,” says Principal Elizabeth Shen. Through working with staff about her own children’s needs, she has both inadvertently and actively taught school staff ways to meet the needs of students who experience a wide range of characteristics associated with autism. Many of the strategies she has shared with the school to support her children, school staff have used to support other students.

Christine “defines ‘super volunteer’ in her roles as a mother, volunteer and a veterinarian,” says Library Technician Urmela Scarlett. She’s an active member of parent council and often the first to volunteer for field trips, school activities and class projects. When the library needed a freshening up, Christine energetically put her organizational skills to work and spent many hours putting books into place. She’s often a highly effective parent supervisor for field trips and happily volunteers to help in and outside of the classroom, including sharing her love and knowledge of animals.

Says the school’s Music Teacher, Sally McIntosh, “She is always so supportive of the teaching staff and models kindness and generosity to both her children and all our students.”

Rosie Lanni, Lynnwood

Rosie is an incredibly dedicated parent volunteer. Not only is she involved in the lives of her own three children, she volunteers countless hours at Lynnwood School and has formed meaningful relationships with many of the students. Rosie is a familiar face to the students and they see her as a trusted, caring individual they can turn to for help.

In addition to volunteering to chaperone field trips and providing healthy snacks for classroom celebrations, Rosie has put many hours of her time into organizing and cataloguing the school library’s collection. She does all of this on top of her job as an accountant and her other volunteer efforts in the wider community.

In the words of Administrative Assistant and school Library Technician, Urmela Scarlett, “Rosie is a true champion for promoting Lynnwood with a tireless commitment to serving our community.”

Mike Stefan, M.E. LaZerte

During his high school years, Mike was known as a talented athlete and an excellent ambassador for M.E. LaZerte by displaying great citizenship in the community. Years later, Mike decided to give back to the school that had meant so much to him. Working with school administrators, Mike created the M.E. LaZerte Athletics Alumni Association.

This organization connects student athletes past, present and future, and works to make sure finances aren't an obstacle for any student who wants to be involved in sports. Mike hosts numerous fundraising events, highlights businesses that support the Association—many of which are owned or managed by LaZerte alumni. Through his desire to give back, Mike has created a wide network of people who are all connected by M.E. LaZerte school and its athletics program.

In addition to supporting athletics at M.E. LaZerte, Mike supports initiatives to provide skills training camps for junior high athletes at M.E. LaZerte's feeder schools. These camps are provided at no cost to the students and coaches.

Mike's ability to connect to people helped him organize a huge homecoming game for the senior football team. This event showed how talented Mike is at planning and organizing events, but also his ability to bring people together. In the words of M.E. LaZerte Athletics Director, Riley Carleton, Mike "created an atmosphere where past Voyageurs and present Voyageurs came together as one. This event was a huge success and was just the kickoff to many more great events."

Debbie Bone, Mount Royal

Debbie has been a dedicated volunteer at Mount Royal School for over 20 years. School staff say she goes above and beyond getting to know staff and students and helps in any way possible, whether it's helping teachers prepare materials, handing out lunch on hot lunch days, or volunteering to support a fundraiser or event.

"When I first came to Mount Royal, she was so kind and helpful," says Teacher Elizabeth Alleyne, "our school is a family and she welcomed me into the family with open arms."

The school library simply would not be the same without Debbie's dedication, whether she is helping to check books in and out, repairing books or setting up, decorating and managing book fairs. She has shared her love of children's books with hundreds of students over the years. Debbie says that "the best thing about working at [the] school is seeing a child's face light up when they see a new book."

When COVID-19 restrictions were put in place it meant Debbie could not physically come to the school, but she continued to stay in touch and has continued to support the school however she can from a distance. Says Principal Mary Ann Dobson, "She is part of our team and family and we want her to know that we love her."

Recognition of Service *continued*

Cindy Thomas, Sakaw

Since 2005, Cindy Thomas has been behind the wheel of a big yellow bus, getting students to and from school safely each day. “Miss Cindy,” as she’s known by students and staff, has been a constant and reassuring face at the helm of the bus for Sakaw families since 2015, when she helped ease the transition for students who were redesignated from the Ellerslie area to Sakaw School.

Sakaw parent Stephanie Emmett says, “Cindy radiates positive energy, which is contagious. I knew our son always had a good environment to be in each morning and on his way home at the end of the day. He often told me stories about the ‘good songs’ and ‘perfect rules’ for kids to follow on the bus. This shows me Cindy struck the perfect balance for the supportive environment we all want our kids to encounter.”

Cindy is known for always taking initiative and going the extra mile in everything she does. She organizes practice runs before the school year begins or if there are changes to her route, is in regular communication with parents and the school and has embraced and practiced all the protocols for COVID-19 safety.

“Cindy has a great relationship with our bus drivers and staff. She is constantly building camaraderie with colleagues in front of our school. Her laughter is infectious. I appreciate the impact her enthusiasm has on our students,” says Principal Elizabeth Fraser.

Lee-Ann Poulton, Steinhauer

Lee-Ann is an incredibly dedicated volunteer at Steinhauer School. Over the last seven years, Lee-Ann has led many initiatives and given her time generously to improve the lives of everyone in the school community. Principal Lori Price-Wagner says, “Mrs. Poulton makes Steinhauer School a better place due to her exemplary commitment, work ethic and generosity.”

Lee-Ann wears many hats at the school: Steinhauer School student alumni, mother of two students, chairperson of the Steinhauer Fundraising for the Future Society (SFFS), head lunchroom supervisor and volunteer extraordinaire!

Through her leadership role with the Steinhauer parent council and SFFS, she has run numerous initiatives to enhance the quality of life for students and the school community including the school milk program, a winter gear drive, the giving tree and Christmas hampers for families, and the student-in-need food program. For the SFFS, Lee-Ann spearheads initiatives to provide additional funding to the school for field trips, technology and classroom supplies.

Lee-Ann’s love and commitment to literacy and the library is evident—she volunteers weekly at the library and leads the birthday book program where students and their families sponsor new books to be purchased for the library on their birthday. Every spring, Lee-Ann organizes the school’s Scholastic Bookfair. This is a large event to run—Lee-Ann puts in hours and hours of work to co-ordinate the event, organize parent volunteers, liaise with the Scholastic representative and more. She does this because she loves seeing the expression on a student’s face when a new book is available to them. Or when the students whisper as they walk by the bookfair being set up, excited to see what new books will be there.

Parent and SFFS treasurer Nicole Hutchinson says, “I’ve known very few people in my lifetime who have given so much and expected nothing in return.”

Erin Black, Strathcona

As a mental health and addictions counsellor with Alberta Health Services, Erin played a significant and important role in the life of students and the school community. Erin has an incredible ability to build strong relationships quickly and was always busy seeing students—a testament to the reputation she had in the school as someone trustworthy and helpful.

Erin was an integral part of the school's crisis response, providing crucial mental health support in some of the most difficult situations. "Her knowledge and skills often served as a resource to others, offering mentorship support to new counsellors and the administrative team," says Assistant Principal Natashya Shewchuk.

Beyond seeing students one-on-one, Erin often spoke to classes and staff and participated in extracurricular events, truly integrating herself into the school community. Erin went above and beyond for students and families—offering after-hours support, accompaniment to outside services and co-ordinating information evenings for parents.

"Erin has been more than a therapist; she has been an advocate and valued educator for mental health in our Scona community by volunteering to present insightful professional development and supportive presentations about mental health to our staff, students and parents," says Department Head of Student Services Ron Ward.

School counsellor Kelcey Letersky says, "Erin's service to our school was exceptional on all levels."

Recognition of Service *continued*

STUDENT

Nathaniel Sorochan, Delwood School

Nathaniel is being recognized for his consistent volunteerism at Delwood School over the past several years. He has a sincere dedication to enhancing educational opportunities for students at his former elementary school. This young man is now attending the University of Alberta and continues to volunteer at Delwood, making himself available to the school virtually.

Teacher Martha Arabski says, “Nathaniel approached me and offered to come to my Grade 4 class to help teach drama.” Martha explains Nathaniel felt there was a need for more drama activities in elementary school. “He recognized that some of the drama games and activities could help students overcome being shy, provide them with another outlet for their creativity and even open up avenues of joy and success in an academic setting for some students,” says Martha. With the support of school administration, Nathaniel began volunteering on a regular basis. Students thoroughly enjoyed the games and activities he brought to the grade 4 students. Martha says, “Nathaniel didn’t just show up and help teach. He researched curriculum expectations, asked which expectations to focus on, prepared detailed lesson plans—complete with warm-ups, learning goals, review and closure activities—and arrived prepared and ready to go. Students were engaged, invested and looked forward to our drama lessons.” Teacher Sandra Covassi shared that Nathaniel also often went into her Grade 3 classroom to help with drama and movement activities, to lead mindfulness exercises and read to students. Students really appreciated when Nathaniel helped out. “Nathaniel is very resourceful and creative, and his willingness to adapt and include everyone shines through when he is working with students,” Sandra says.

Nathaniel volunteered with teachers in various other areas as well—like French as a Second Language, health and physical education. “Students found Nathaniel to be approachable and enjoyed the activities he planned for them,” says Assistant Principal Chelsea Robinson. “He was always pleasant and polite, and acted professional when dealing with both students and adults.” His volunteerism goes beyond Delwood School. He is also actively involved in the Delwood community, helping at various community events with things such as DJ-ing youth dances.

Anwi Patel, Grandview School

Anwi is a Grade 10 student at McNally School this year but is being recognized for her service at Grandview School last year. Not only is Anwi a dedicated and organized student, she is committed to serving her school and broader community as well. “Anwi’s hard work and dedication to serving the community speaks to her character,” says Teacher Tammy Kluchka. “She is a great role model and has a great willingness to work with others. Anwi was a consistently polite and respectful student who engaged both classmates and staff in conversations to share ideas and learn about other perspectives.”

Anwi served on Grandview’s student council for two years where her growth mindset shone through with her ability to receive and use feedback and apply that to challenges. Her goal was always to create new student experiences and improve the overall school community. Anwi created videos to recognize staff birthdays and acknowledge their work and efforts. She was on the speech and debate team and volunteered for many school activities like the open house. She was also the technology co-ordinator at the Terry Fox Run event, where she produced a heartfelt PowerPoint and video to provide a greater sense of understanding and appreciation for the cause. Anwi also represented Grandview School at the Career Pathways Symposium. During the COVID-19 pandemic, as a member of the Farewell Committee, Anwi planned and facilitated the first virtual farewell event. She created the Grade 9 commemorative video to recognize students for their efforts and successes.

Outside school, Anwi was a Youth at Large member with the City of Edmonton Youth Council. She served on the Social Equity Committee with the purpose of creating meaningful community change. She even wrote to the City of Edmonton about the importance of a mandatory mask bylaw.

On top of all of her school and community commitments, Anwi also helps out with her family’s business. “Anwi is a well-rounded, caring individual who makes a difference in the community,” says Teacher Philip Ho.

Recognition of Teams

CRITERIA: To recognize the contributions made to the Division by a group of parents and community members, the achievement of a significant goal through co-operative group efforts by students in Grades 7 to 12, and the excellent contributions made to the Division by staff through collaborative group efforts. The focus is on co-operation, participation and excellence in performance by a group of people. Achievement or contribution has brought distinction to the group, the school and/or the Division.

STAFF

Balwin Educational Assistants

This team consists of Eden Askale, Cristina Diaz, Anita Doonan, Kim Gould, Joanne Jenkins, Harley Kennett, Dhruva Kharti, Katie McKenna, Laura Meace, Medias Musabimana, Jeannine Poole, Erika Reynolds, Melanie Richards, Patti St. Pierre, Amanda Stamhuis and Adele Woo.

Last year, this Balwin team did groundbreaking work with students who had complex and sometimes difficult situations. “It is because of their kindness, patience, understanding and compassion that students felt safe and were able to overcome challenges,” says Teacher Chanelle Cluett-Alstad. They were extremely flexible to the needs of the school and often just stepped in to help without being asked. Teacher Meghan Brohman says, “The patience, care and kindness these individuals have for each child and their learning has been paramount.” They continually came up with new ways to build a stronger relationship with each student.

Normally they are assigned to support a specific class but last year, they were extremely flexible in supporting any student and family. “During the pandemic crisis this past spring, this team went above and beyond to organize, support, coach, mentor and educate students that needed extra support,” says Principal Christina Jones. Their strong team relationship was critical to the success of supporting students and families. “They worked like a ‘hand in a glove’,” says Principal Jones. Even the school community noticed the amazing online and door to door service by these individuals.

Last year, Balwin also participated in the Hockey Helps Kids competition. These team members worked tirelessly behind the scenes. They used their amazing technology and digital media skills to create products and materials to market to the community and urged people to vote. Their efforts helped Balwin win the charity cup title.

This team remained resilient, kind and eager to help wherever they could. Principal Jones says, “Their commitment to service leadership is inspiring.”

Belmont Elementary School Staff

This team consists of Lynn Allison, Selynne Buchan, Shelly Cannard, Sydney Cava, Sophie Cote, Laura Drummond, Terran Dymichkowsky, Florence Harding, Angela Hebert, Margaretha Huisert, April Kirk, Carrie Knight, Rachele Lavergne, Vanessa Littmann, Thomas MacPherson, Linda Mah, Naimo Musse, Norelys Norelys, Caitlin Oberhofer, Peggy Pistun, Charlotte Rollans, Sarah Rudkowsky, Arnel San Luis, Carolyn Stiles, Alix Sydenham and Maryana Volosatska, and led by Principal Shane Grundy.

Parent Ingrid Hoogenboom shared that when Principal Grundy joined the school in the fall of 2019, he began using the phrase ‘we are all one pack.’ It was a philosophy that would guide the staff and teachers in their efforts to bring co-operation, participation and excellence to the school community. Last fall, this initiated a shift in culture and by the spring, it carried the school community through a tremendously difficult time.

Belmont staff have been great about keeping our school informed about what’s happening in the community, about partnerships with local businesses and about what is happening in the school division.

“When schools shifted to online learning back in March, Belmont staff rose to the occasion with enthusiasm and determination like I have never seen before,” says parent Erika Ratzlaff. They lent out Chromebooks and printed lesson workbooks for any student who needed it, and communication was frequent and regular. First thing every morning, staff could be depended on to be online to give announcements, read a story, have a conversation about how everyone was doing, or provide words of encouragement. “They made our family feel like we weren’t alone,” says another parent, Joy Hoolahan.

On top of daily lesson plans and activities and games to support learning, staff were constantly looking for new ways to keep students engaged—like interactive websites, new software for students to submit schoolwork, or teacher videos to supplement online instruction time. Principal Grundy’s phone messages were clear and easy to understand, and he even created encouraging videos for parents, with heartfelt encouragement during some discouraging times. Teachers remained positive and devoted right to the end of the school year. “Learning continued to be not only adequate, but exceptional,” says Erika Ratzlaff.

In April, the school ran Project Rainbow, challenging the kids to create rainbows. These pictures were shared with everyone in the school to spread hope and to encourage them that “everything is going to be ok. Local businesses Red Swan Pizza and Belmont Sobey’s joined the challenge, creating their own food versions of rainbows and posting the kids’ creations in stores. “If that doesn’t prove we are all one pack, I’m not sure what does,” says Ingrid Hoogenboom.

Recognition of Teams *continued*

Belmont Elementary First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Team

This team consists of Selynne Buchan and Caitlin Oberhofer. They are outstanding lead teachers in the area of First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) education and their work has had a tremendously positive impact on the school community. Through their work, the school has seen a 50 per cent increase in families self identifying as FNMI. Indigenous students respectfully see themselves in their culture and are appropriately represented in both the physical building and within the conversations teachers lead.

They have embedded FNMI teachings into the curriculum through storytelling, music, games and having Elders share their knowledge. Their first big project was inviting an Elder into the school work with all the students and to leave a teepee in the library for all students to enjoy and learn from. They planned and executed many school-wide activities and community gatherings, such as the Inuit Winter Games, blanket exercises and the Wahkotawin family event. After securing grant money, they carried out a year-long project that included bringing in Indigenous storytellers for months as well as working with a theatre company to create skits to perform to the whole school.

This team also provided professional development for staff at Belmont and catchment schools. Last year, this duo even presented professional learning sessions to participants across Canada at the Indspire Education Conference in Toronto.

Teacher Consultant Adam Ambrozy says, “What they have done to consistently engage the entire school in Indigenous education is unmatched. They have single-handedly shifted the culture of their school to a place where Indigenous education is not an add on activity but a daily component.”

Delton Assessment Foundations Team

This team consists of Katie Chapman, David Hamblin, Katharine Rolf and Rayanna Tremblay. Principal Christine Simmons says, “This team’s efforts have dramatically impacted the culture, enrichment and overall systems of support at Delton. They voluntarily committed to supporting assessment work and quickly evolved into an exceptional group that went beyond to inspire, connect and engage students, community and fellow colleagues.”

They led a variety of leadership opportunities and clubs in a variety of areas such as art, anime, science technology, social skills and assembly ambassadors. They also organized events like Art in the Heart and academic celebrations. Helping and leading is in their hearts.

Last March when in-person learning was suspended, these team members were instrumental in supporting and bridging learning. They supported administration by calling families, helped distribute resources, and created how-to videos and troubleshooting tutorials to help both colleagues and families with technology support. They also supported the ongoing distribution of food hampers and learning materials. Their contributions have gone well beyond the scope of the classroom setting.

“This team is part of what makes Delton great,” says Assistant Principal Nikki Wiebe. “We are grateful every day for their presence in the school.” Administrative Assistant Sue Pederson says, “Over the course of a career, you come across people you would ‘follow’ and these individuals fall into that category.”

Kensington Interactions Team

This team consists of Debbie Benson, Thanh Hoang, Janelle Jamili, Aisha Khaled, Kaylie Nyboer, Ana Pinto-Garrido and Michelle Rakoczy.

This team is gentle and kind, and they love their jobs. You can tell not only from the numbers of hours they put in but also by the quality of conversations they have with their students, families and each other. “I am very impressed by their professionalism, calm, strength, patience and positive outlook,” says Principal Dao Haddad. “They are all about a growth mindset. They are constantly moving to meet their students where they are and that is magical to watch.” They continually collaborate to find ways to improve as individuals and a team.

Students are engaged in their learning. They have created a number of assignments and projects that support emergent literacy practices for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder. This has given students the freedom to express their knowledge. They have developed a particularly stimulating learning environment including hands-on strategies, planned instruction based on research, and growth for student’s ability and achievement. Assistant Principal Shaun Shore says, “I have seen huge growth in all the students’ ability to read, write and communicate.”

In a sometimes hectic classroom, their responses are quick, insightful and effective. Their ability to assess each student and provide programming and supports based on their individual needs shows the amount of love and care they carry with them. Students love these teachers and educational assistants.

“We’re so proud of this team,” says Principal Haddad.

Recognition of Teams *continued*

L.Y. Cairns Office Team

This team consists of Jessica Cox, Deb Day and Crystal MacKay. “This team is truly the heartbeat of our school and they always go above and beyond expectations for the benefit of our students, staff and guests to ensure they feel valued as soon as they enter our school office,” says Principal Errol Johnson. They genuinely care about and respect each person they work with. They are a high performance team.

Crystal is the leader of this team. She creates a caring and enjoyable work atmosphere. She ensures all the departments have the resources they need, assists families experiencing financial hardship, and keeps track of spending to ensure the school runs within their budget. Families are made to feel comfortable reaching out for help when they need it. Jessica is much more than an educational assistant. She works in the office and the library, and supports classrooms and the medical needs of many students. She also helps with graduation planning and last year, prepared a virtual celebration. Deb is the first person of contact and she has the unique ability to make everyone feel important. She does everything from scheduling and maintaining student records to co-ordinating report cards and managing transportation and busing activities. Assistant Principal Gordon King explained they have all been known to try and help out families by fundraising, lobbying donors, seeking professional help or sometimes giving out of their own pockets.

Last year in particular, they helped overcome many challenges. At the start of the year, the school was undergoing renovations and the office was relocated into the hallway at the front of the schools. This team didn’t skip a beat making sure school start-up went as smoothly as possible. Then at winter break, they gave up part of their vacation time to set the renovated office back up, so there would be minimal disruption when classes returned. Then with the onset of COVID-19, they worked very hard to support the school’s re-entry plan, ensuring all necessary supplies like personal protective equipment and signage were in place. In fact, the Alberta Health Services inspector said of all the schools they had inspected, none were as proactive as L.Y. Cairns. Assistant Principal Barbara Cameron explained that this team even put together care packages for staff, orchestrated food deliveries for families in need, ensured students had access to Chromebooks and provided emotional support to countless individuals every day.

“We truly are lucky to have this amazing team at our school,” says Principal Johnson.

L.Y. Cairns Room 223 Team

The team members are Mark Edey and Angie Maris. They work with the students with the highest needs in the school—students who have extreme emotional and behaviour needs. Their students have mild intellectual disability and also struggle with mental health conditions and behavioural concerns.

Mark and Angie are optimistic and approach their assignments with genuine enthusiasm; their optimism is very empowering to the students, families and staff alike.

Principal Errol Johnson says, “Mark is a natural born teacher who consistently goes above all reasonable expectations to ensure students have the opportunity to be successful—like dropping off resources to students during the COVID-19 pandemic.” His students generally find school challenging but he expects each student to perform to the best of their ability. As a result of his passion, many of his students achieve at levels well beyond their wildest expectations. Angie is a skilled and dedicated Educational Assistant. “She has a great understanding of the importance of creating a positive and welcoming learning environment,” says Principal Johnson. She is genuinely caring and respects everyone she comes into contact with. She is always conscious of the words she uses and is aware of their potential impact. She is an advocate for all her students and families, and provides every opportunity she can for students to be successful and for parents to be engaged.

Day-to-day life in the classroom can be unpredictable. Mark and Angie work closely together as a team, supporting and anticipating each other’s actions and needs. They work together to build trust through kindness, firmness, fairness and empathy. “They have the ability to think carefully and quickly to ensure the physical safety and emotional well-being of everyone in the classroom at all times,” says Assistant Principal Barbara Cameron. They helped students build self-esteem by teaching them skills like banking, shopping, cooking and doing volunteer work within a community business.

“In my 25 plus years in education, I have never encountered two educators more committed to the health and welfare of the students in their care,” says Assistant Principal Gordon King.

M.E. LaZerte Culinary Arts Team

This team consists of Andrew Hess, Wesley Kube, Patricia Pawluk and Dylan Scofield.

Administrative Assistant Susan Ketterington says, “This remarkable team works as a cohesive unit to coach, mentor, teach and guide a large class of culinary students. They bring the curriculum, and the students, to life.”

Under their leadership, students learn all facets of operations including ordering supplies, planning, preparing, troubleshooting and serving meals - both for in-school and take-out services. Students are supported and set up for success as they learn real-world skills they can immediately transfer to their industry. Lunch supervisor Andrew Tremblay says, “This team leads by example and works together so well. Their ability to use their budget to create an amazing culinary experience is truly a daily feat.” With their students, they create restaurant worthy dishes for affordable prices.

“The commitment of this team has endeared them to our hearts (and stomachs) forever,” says Administrative Assistant Dani Litchfield. “They are an impactful and humble group.”

Recognition of Teams *continued*

Meadowlark Online Support Team

This team consists of Teacher Jennifer Bagshaw, Social Work Consultant Dong Kim and Assistant Principal Jei Yin. They are being recognized for their outstanding support for a student whose mental health took a dramatic turn for the worse when students and teachers moved to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic last spring.

“Their commitment to this student surpassed anything I’ve encountered,” says former Meadowlark Principal Heather Langenhahn. “Together they organized interventions, supports, translations, resources and countless hours, days, weeks and months of supporting the mental health of a child.”

They did not let the limits of COVID-19 prevent them from helping this child and they found solutions to a very complex situation. Principal Sharilyn Purych says, “Their creative efforts made possible the continuation and enhanced supports needed for this student.” They had daily Google meets with the student, met with parents on the phone and in a socially distanced capacity, provided translation support with the parents, and developed meaningful engagement with the family.

The relationships they had and developed were vital in helping navigate online life for this student. Their care and desire to help a student in crisis led to the student’s improved mental health and a stronger family unit.

Strathcona Custodial Team

This team consists of Tina Bravo-Reyes, Josue Faustino, Tsegabu Gebrengus, Carmen Gomez, Gilbert Legion, Armohom Narayan, Kristoffer Necesito, Tom Porter, Marilou Valencia and Colleen Warren.

In addition to ongoing construction at the school and undergoing huge staff changes last year, a lot of additional pressure fell to this team with the arrival of COVID-19. In addition to keeping the building clean, they took on the task of sanitizing the school every day. “They were flexible, adapted to changing circumstances and continued to keep the building clean and safe,” says Principal Hans Van Ginhoven. “It seems that with each and every challenge the custodial team is faced with, they accept the challenge with a professional, upbeat manner, and always with a smile,” department head Richard McAdie adds.

As September came around, they thoroughly cleaned the school to get ready for students to return. In addition to their normal duties, they also now clean classrooms at noon and again after school. This is no easy task. Through trial and error, they came up with a system that has allowed them to maintain this schedule, even when they may be short staffed. “They take pride in their work and work in a collaborative manner with true team spirit,” says Administrative Assistant Maria Leighton.

This team has demonstrated compassion, caring and commitment to the health and safety of the school community. “Their efforts are much appreciated by everyone,” says Principal Van Ginhoven.

Sweet Grass Elementary School Staff

This team consists of Gloria Chao, Loyda Collins, Jon Cram, Brunette Dale, Wendy Fawcett, Jennifer Fulks, Joyce Fung, Stephanie Garcia, Nicole Gardner, Tammy Genge, Andriana Georgopolis, Maria Herrera, Kelly Hess, Norma Johnson, Cindy Lechelt, Melanie Lee, Kristy Lundstrom, Rosana Motta, Taylor Nelson, Ludy Nerona, Emily Okken, Colleen Peters, Ashna Ram, Rushmi Rincon, Desiree Roberts, Julie Schuster, Jennifer Williams and Jason Yeats, and led by Principal Vanessa LeCaine.

Sweet Grass School has a diverse student body, which includes the Spanish Bilingual program. Thanks to the efforts of each and every staff member, the students, parents and surrounding community benefit from the welcoming, inclusive and unified sense of belonging. For instance, their front entrance sidewalk is painted in a rainbow to support LGBTQ persons and school announcements are made in both English and Spanish. They organized a cultural showcase and an antique showcase where students would display and write about family artifacts to promote awareness of different origins. They also brought an Elder into the school to build a teepee in the library to promote awareness and knowledge of First Nations, Métis and Inuit culture. “Promotion of kindness as a core character trait flows from the inclusive nature of the school,” say parents Ken Cockwill and Alana Shrubsole-Cockwill.

Many initiatives have been introduced under the direction of Principal LeCaine. Everyone is encouraged to give back to others. As a result, some of the many community support initiatives the school led was donating over 1,600 pairs of socks, collecting Food Bank donations, and participating in both the Terry Fox fundraiser run and the Jump Rope for Heart campaign. The school started the Roots and Shoots and No Waste November to promote planting and the importance of caring for our Earth. Book Club encouraged students to read anything and anywhere. A lunchtime yoga program accessible to students was started to promote mental and physical wellness. The list goes on.

“Going the extra mile for their students has become second nature to not only the teachers at this school, but to all staff,” says parent Jennifer Onyshko. This is all evidenced by numerous examples like the front office staff providing guidance, the custodial staff being willing to clean up popcorn after a lunch time fundraiser, the librarian reading to classes and making the library a welcoming space, and the teachers, support staff and school administration promoting the importance of literacy and lifelong learning. Jennifer further shared, “While I feel that Sweet Grass School is exemplary every year, the 2019/2020 school year really showed me what a team like theirs can achieve.” While students and teachers navigated the uncertainty together, they did everything possible to maintain a sense of normalcy, routine and school spirit. They presented engaging lessons through technology like Kahoot, developed extra programming, had theme days like crazy hat day, hosted LeCaine’s Learning Challenges, where she uploaded a fun video and optional challenge, a teacher read on her roof each Friday to anyone who could join in, and a teacher ran a yoga club online.

“The contribution that each and every one of them has made to hundreds of students has elevated education as I know it and I will continue to hold all future encounters with Edmonton Public to the standard of excellence that this team has set,” says parent Jessica Zapata.

Recognition of Teams *continued*

Vimy Ridge Individual Support Program (ISP) Team

This team consists of Michael Groves, Jude Alim, Bonnie Bloomfield and Tanya Palmowski. Every day, they work with 12 of the school's most medically fragile students, supporting these students and their families in every facet of school life. "They are believers in an inclusive school environment that supports a culture of health and wellbeing for all our students," says Principal Jillian Marino. This team works closely with students' families, building and maintaining strong relationships over the school year, and with medical professionals, who support students with various therapeutics when necessary.

The program they oversee focuses on creating maximum independence for students and generalizes successes and practices communication in diverse locations like the mall, library, swimming pool and job related settings. They help students work on daily living skills, and with improving on academic areas like literacy and numeracy. The ISP team also helps expand students' expressive and receptive communication, safety awareness, social skills, community awareness, recreational skills, fine and gross motor skills and job possibility awareness and work related knowledge and skills.

As the school has and continues to work through the pandemic, this team has also provided at-home learning for ISP students. They understand the importance of relationships and make sure that the students and their families know they are there to support and keep connections to their classroom and school strong. Using best practices and technology, they are able to seamlessly provide an engaging program no matter where these students are working from.

The ISP team is also an important resource for other staff members; they provide ideas and support to educators needing to differentiate for students in all of our classes. "All four members are fiercely passionate about their roles as mentors and educators and mix the delivery of professional knowledge with teaching empathy, kindness and fortitude," says Assistant Principal Andrew Morgan. Their positivity is infectious.

PARENT/COMMUNITY

Bryan and Alison's No Frills Team, Rutherford and King Edward Schools

This team consists of parents and No Frills business owners Bryan McClean and Alison Rees-Middleton. They are being recognized for their service to both Rutherford and King Edward schools. Rutherford Curriculum Co-ordinator Alyssa Prouty says, "They demonstrate an uncommon generosity." They initiated school nutrition programs at both schools to reduce barriers to food security and education. For the past six years, Bryan and Alison have been providing enough fresh fruit so that any student can pick a piece of fruit at any time of the day. At Rutherford, their community fruit bowl program, Rutherfordridge, provides healthy food choices. Their business also supports school and community events such as the Flying Canoe Volant festival and the school family dance.

"Not only do Bryan and Alison have a desire to ensure students are not hungry in school, they also have a vision for helping kids become fluent readers," says King Edward Principal Eileen Rygus. They worked with Principal Rygus to encourage reading at home by creating the 100 nights of reading challenge. Students reaching this goal were treated to an ice cream sundae party provided by Bryan and Alison. This led to the 200-night challenge with students being rewarded with a pizza lunch.

As individuals, they volunteer throughout the year to support classroom teachers and generally do whatever they can to assist the school. They've organized and led school-wide events such as Rutherford's barbecue, where they even brought their own volunteers and arranged all the details. As huge supporters of Rutherford's music program, they even organized the COVID-19 friendly music bags students are using this year. They also donate hampers, gifts and winter clothing to families in need. Alison has also been known to provide delicious baked treats to uplift staff.

Rutherford Principal Simon Williams says, "What is remarkable about Bryan and Alison is the caring they demonstrated and the vision they have for making their corner of the world a better place."

Recognition of Teams *continued*

Dr. Margaret-Ann Armour Playground Committee

This team consists of the following parents and community members: Jennifer Aziz, Leanne Drury-Melsness, Candice Hendrickson, Anoop Johal, Hayley Kemper, Jillian Love, Sheri Macdonald and Maja Osland. These dedicated parents began working on the playground development committee before the school even opened in 2016. For the last four years, this group worked tirelessly with the City of Edmonton to plan and develop the park, apply for funding grants, organize many fundraisers, recruit volunteers and collect feedback from stakeholders.

Principal Jody Lundell says, “More than 900 students use this playground daily during recess or part of the physical education program at our school. Students, families and staff continue to express their gratitude to the playground committee. It is impossible to imagine our school without this beautiful and innovative playground.”

The committee was very intentional with building an accessible playground that would appeal to children of all ages. Children with complex needs are able to safely access the equipment and interact with peers. Older students are able to use the bike paths, seating areas and green spaces surrounding the park area. The playground has a unique science and chemistry theme as a nod to the school’s namesake, Dr. Margaret-Ann Armour, who passed away in 2019.

“As a staff member, I got to experience first-hand the joy on our students’ faces while they were watching the playground being built,” says Robyn Graham, Educational Assistant and parent of a child at Dr. Margaret-Ann Armour. “The DMAA playground has provided a space for our students to genuinely connect to one another including, our students with complex needs, and each detail of this park was thought out to truly meet the play needs of all our students.”

“The Ambleside playground is about much more than an exercise in building a playground,” says Trustee Nathan Ip. “The playground brought people together, allowed a sense of community to be created and flourish, and fostered a sense of belonging for all involved in the project.”

Greater Highlands Community Parent Councils

This team consists of parent groups from Highlands, Montrose and Mount Royal schools. Over the past year, they have collaborated as they move towards the consolidation into the new Highlands School in 2021. The members of this team include: Nickela Anderson, Penny Chu, Randi Creighton, Kristine Edgington, Julianne Gilchrist, Jenni Hartt, Andrea Lewis, Cassidy Luchy, Linda Mecready, Brenda Porter, Tracy Potter MacSwain, Nichole Quiring, Olivia Ramirez Zamora, David Rice, Shannon Robinson, Solange Schau, Blake Seidler, Katrina Seidler, Helen Smith, Chris Stogrin, Kelly Verhegge, Christina Ward, Gail Wichert, Jeremy Wright and Jessica Wright.

The three schools are in a unique position as they will be amalgamated into the one modernized Highlands School in September 2021. For the past three years, although each parent society has continued to serve their own school, staff and parent society members from the three school sites also began collaborating to make the transition to one school as seamless as possible. Mount Royal Principal Mary-Ann Dobson explained that the parents started collaborating on committees and events ranging from supporting each others' long-standing fundraisers, and began working as a team to fundraise for a new playground and to re-imagine traditions at the amalgamated school.

These parent associations are an integral part of these school communities. "They are true partners and collaborate with the schools to support the schools' goals and plans," says Montrose Principal Laurie Caines. Each parent group fundraises, organizes and hosts events, supports technology needs, supports arts programming and sponsoring Artists in Residence, and most importantly, they help build a sense of community. They keep students at the heart of all the decisions they make. At Montrose, some of the many additional activities are hot lunches, teacher and staff appreciation days, bake sales and theme days. At Mount Royal, some of the additional initiatives the parent group helps with are the outdoor classroom materials, Kindergarten parent coffee talks and school sporting events. At Highlands, the parent group can be found working tirelessly to advocate for the social, emotional and nutritional supports necessary to support academic success. Highlands Principal Maureen Matthews says, "I am incredibly proud to work with a group of parents who support the staff and students at Highlands; their regular inquiries into how "staff are doing" or "what does the school need" are greatly appreciated."

This is an impressive team of parent groups that have come together for the benefit of the overall Greater Highlands community

Recognition of Teams *continued*

Horse Hill Parent Advisory Association (PAA) Executive Team

The members of this team are Kalynn Barker, Jennifer Drob, Lesley Ewoniak, Tanya McArdle, Taryn McDonald and Jennifer Prosser.

“They are a dynamic team that through leadership and collaboration, have served the Horse Hill community to enhance and ensure a welcoming and quality learning environment for all students, staff and families,” says Principal Nouha El-Ali. “Taking on a principalship at Horse Hill, I was welcomed by a PAA executive team that deeply cared for our community and ensured opportunities equitably to all families.”

Teacher Asma Waraich says, “They contribute ideas, time and resources that improve the learning environment, the resources and school spirit of Horse Hill.” Through tireless fundraising, community and school events and initiatives—like book drives, the hot lunch program and the welcome back barbecue—this team generously supported staff in creating amazing opportunities for kids. Staff were supported through a wish-list process where proceeds fundraised by the PAA went towards additional technology, field trips and classroom materials and resources—all the while ensuring not a single student went without and the community’s voice was cherished and celebrated.

Fine Arts Teacher Marilyn Gehring expressed appreciation for the PAA’s ongoing support of the visual arts, drama, music and physical education, to name a few. They’ve provided access to Artists in Residence and purchased new music equipment to support the music program. Over the years, they have even provided funding for all the students in the school to have the unique experience of attending the symphony at the Winspear Centre. They are also the first people to volunteer when we need any parent support for any program in the school.

“I consider myself privileged and humbled to walk, work, learn, and celebrate alongside this model team,” says Principal El-Ali.

John D. Bracco/Balwin Constable Duo

This team consists of School Resource Officers (SRO) Constables Janice Martens and Dan Stewart. This is a joint service nomination from the northeast Edmonton school community. Last year, Constable Martens was a part-time SRO at John D. Bracco and Constable Stewart was a part-time SRO at Balwin. Although assigned to different schools, they worked collaboratively to support students, parents, school staff and the overall community. They also supported the two Catholic schools in the area.

John D. Bracco Principal Sheri Long says, “Constable Martens brought with her wonderful relationships within the Clareview Community. She had connections and relationships with the staff at the Clareview Recreation Centre, the nearby stores, along with the neighbouring family support services like the C5 Hub and Community Empowerment Team, which all served to support her integration into John D. Bracco and her relationships with our community.” At the school, she built strong relationships with the success coach, office staff, teaching staff and students. She helped with numerous activities at the school, a few of which include coaching volleyball, starting a weekly Girl Power lunch hour program (self-defense and kickboxing), supporting lockdown procedures, and attending council meetings and English Language Learners parent information nights so the school community could get to know her better. Christine Belter, the supervisor of operations and site coordination at Clareview Community Recreation Centre, says, “I observed Constable Martens help many youth resolve incidents with their best interest in mind. Through her work, she helped stop negative behaviours, and developed fair consequences and alternative activities to aid positive development of students.” Principal Long says, “She is an exemplary citizen and member of the community.”

Balwin Principal Christina Jones explained that Constable Stewart also brought with him wonderful community relationships and resources. He also developed great relationships with the school’s success coach, office and teaching staff, and students alike. He facilitated home visits to support families and students that needed community assistance, engaged in activities with students, helped with the school’s food security program (including picking up and delivering food to families), and organized and supported bicycle deliveries through a donation program. Constable Stewart supported lockdowns processes, liaised with Children’s Services and the Zebra Centre, and was a partner in Balwin’s Circle of Supports to ensure at-risk students received the support they needed. These are just some of the numerous examples of the initiatives and supports he provided the Balwin community. “Constable Stewart made a difference every day. He was well admired by all. His commitment was not only commendable, it was inspiring,” says Principal Jones.

When COVID-19 hit last spring, both Constable Martens and Stewart supported wellness checks on students and families throughout the catchment, helped deliver Chromebooks and school supplies, and helped arrange food deliveries. These two constables have had a lasting impact on the northeast Edmonton community.

Recognition of Teams *continued*

Kim Hung Fundraising Society and Glastonbury Community League

The members of this team are Colleen Christie, Lorna Driesen, Matt Finley, Kimberly Johnson, Melissa Lewanczuk, Laurie Matheson and Maury Porter.

Before the school even opened, this group of parents stepped up to establish the fundraising society so they were able to start applying for grants and get in the queue for a casino to raise funds for a school playground. Assistant Principal Shelly Jobagy says, “This exceptional group of parents worked tirelessly to access support and resources, allowing us to open the playground just three years after the opening of the school.” They were very mindful of designing and constructing a space that was inclusive of age and ability. “The assortment of equipment doesn’t limit where, with what, or with whom a student can interact and play with,” says Teacher Jeff Webster. Teacher George Diduck says, “Thanks to the tireless efforts of this team, many children of all ages will have a safe environment to play in and build fond and lifelong memories.”

Members of this team have also dedicated their time to hosting events to help bring the school community together—organizing everything from a family carnival and silent auction to a magic show. They’ve also worked with other school groups to co-ordinate reduced rates to Snow Valley Ski Club and West Edmonton Waterpark and Galaxyland.

The school’s namesake, Kim Hung, believed you should always seek ways to help better the community. This group lives up to this way of being, and continually seeks ways to improve the lives of students and families.

L.Y. Cairns Parent Support Group

This enthusiastic and optimistic team consists of L.Y. Cairns Parent Advisory Council (PAC) members Diane Kratky, Barbara Marocco and Andrea Neilsen, and parents Daryl and Joy Procinsky. “This small but powerful group has worked endlessly for the benefit of our school and they have become vital components of our school’s family” says Principal Errol Johnson. “They are relentless when it comes to finding ways to support our students.”

Some of the many ways the PAC has helped our students include buying Chromebooks for students, contributing to the school nutrition program, creating an outdoor classroom and constructing an accessible adult outdoor fitness centre. This centre is the first of its kind in Alberta. They support, encourage and celebrate diversity; this has been very beneficial as many of the students have a variety of intellectual and physical needs. These parents include students in their fundraising efforts, which helps them develop important skills they will be able to transfer to future employment.

Daryl and Joy have wholeheartedly embraced the school’s focus on employability. They have worked hard to help the school make connections with various industries (like construction and trades) that are willing to create student work experience placements in their businesses. These connections are so vital, as the work experience leads to potential lifelong employment opportunities for the students. In fact, they even organized and led an employer’s conference where company owners and CEOs were invited to the school for a tour, and to meet some students and learn about their differing abilities and how they might fit into the structure of their businesses. Mr. and Mrs. Procinsky have recently put their own successful architectural design firm on hold and have taken the lead in a not-for-profit called Ability Centered Employment (ACES). The goal of ACES is to partner with businesses that will hire and match L.Y. Cairns students to suitable jobs so they can continue to be successful after graduation. “Their ability to guide staff and motivate them through inspiration is beyond measure,” says Assistant Principal Gordon King.

Strathcona School Council

The members of this team are Cheryl Chetkiewicz, Lisa Dickner, Lynnette Lopatka and Megan McDougald.

Last spring with the onset of the COVID-19 lockdown and switch to online learning, the school council responded magnificently by switching to online Zoom meetings, explains Principal Hans Van Ginhoven. “Without questions, this team brought unity, strength and calm during a time of so much uncertainty and fear,” says Assistant Principal Natashya Shewchuk. These individuals have huge hearts and a real passion for enriching the Strathcona experience for students and parents. They are described as smart communicators, efficient workers and dedicated community members.

The frequency of the meetings actually increased to almost two meetings a month where they provided valuable information on topics such as mental health and remote teaching and learning. Through these meetings, the school also had the opportunity to provide information about COVID-19 re-entry plans. At each session, parents were also given the opportunity to voice concerns and ask the Administration questions—parents felt connected to the school. Parent Keri Walmsley says, “The conversations were frank, honest and inclusive. All assistant principals joined the Principal in sharing what they knew, and the school counsellors and resource officer shared their insights too.”

These sessions were well attended, and in fact, reached the highest attendance point in August when 500 parents attended the meeting. “By thinking outside the box, the executive revitalized and energized the school council meetings,” says Principal Van Ginhoven.

This team navigated the virtual landscape with the utmost competence and professionalism. They facilitated each meeting, guided Strathcona Administration through presentations, monitored an extremely busy chat feature, and even used Eventbrite to track attendance numbers. Assistant Principal Shewchuk says, “They were a well oiled machine. Strathcona is stronger because of their efforts and we couldn’t be more thankful.”

Recognition of Teams *continued*

STUDENT/DIVISION STAFF

Dr. Margaret-Ann Armour Circle of Friends

This team consists of Educational Assistants Tara Coffey, Kristina Gorokhova and Noreen Megyesi, and students Taylor Eberhardt, Ekemini Etuk, Danika Fullerton and Ainsley Pollock.

Circle of Friends is a program that celebrates diversity, inclusion, friendship and connection. It began four years ago by educational assistants and plays a significant role in the school community by giving students with complex needs the opportunity to participate in meaningful play with age appropriate peers while also being a wonderful leadership opportunity for those who volunteer to be friends.

This focus on friendship and connection among students of all abilities is enriching for all involved. Parent Hanaa Gaafar says, “My son thrives in this program as being embraced by his peers boosts his confidence and self-esteem.”

Students who participate in Circle of Friends have built and continue to build lasting friendships. In its early years, Circle of Friends was 12 students in a single grade. This quickly grew to be a diverse group of students and staff from across all grades, totalling over 80 participants in 2020. This group has been an inspiration to the entire school community and beyond.

Students in this group have developed empathy, compassion, leadership and a sense of how they can make a difference while treating others as equal.

When in-person classes were cancelled in spring 2020, many students reached out to see how they could continue to connect with their friends in Circle of Friends. Shortly after, students were able to join a teacher-hosted Google Meet once a week and play games online. They organized scavenger hunts, read books, drew pictures, played pictionary and many other activities that built connections and fostered friendships among all students involved.

John D. Bracco Bruins Soccer Institute

This team consists of students Asma Ahmed, Sahil Aulakh, Mira Beyeke, Stefan Blagojevich, Deanna Brewster, Dominique Diaz, Liban Dubad, Xiarh Francois-Taylor, Kadie Gargas, Mohamed Hajdari, Benjola Hamza, Leo Redekop, Yohami Torres and Sarai Zelaya, and Teachers Osmo Bimba, Briony Buchanan, JT Tehara and Jay Vetsch.

The John D. Bracco Bruins Soccer Institute has become a permanent fixture in the school for the past four years. Led by the phenomenal teachers above, this team not only inspires a love for soccer, it encourages community involvement and helps students gain valuable leadership skills that will stay with them for life.

“The Bruins Soccer Institute Staff have proven time and time again that they hold their values true in everything they do with students. By keeping these kids connected to something bigger, often pulling them out of difficult circumstances and holding kids to a higher standard than they’ve ever experienced, they are saving lives,” says Jay Hrycun, Assistant Principal at John D. Bracco School. “The work the institute has done for the community is a shining example of what it means to be a leader. By inspiring our future leaders, the effects will grow and spread—benefitting our entire community.”

Each year, the team helps ease the transition for Grade 6 students from nearby schools who come to John D. Bracco for junior high. The team goes into elementary schools that feed into John D. Bracco to talk about their experiences at John D. Bracco and the programs the school offers, in addition to leading soccer activities with the students.

Says Bannerman School Principal Tara Copeman, “There is such value in giving students the opportunity to be leaders and serve younger kids. You see them both internalize and externalize the values that exemplify servant leadership and they rise to live it. We are so thrilled that the Bruins Team worked to seek out this opportunity for their students and that they shared this experience with Bannerman students.”

Old Scona Student Engagement Team (SET)

The team members are students Sarjana Alam, Emily An, Akhilan Arulmozhi, Aayush Banerjee, Alexander Cai, Tracy Cai, Zenab Gill, Edward Han, Nimra Hooda, Vansh Jyotishi, Hannah Kim, Amber Li, Emma Li, Sara Malik-Vidal, Alexandra Ann Mykitiuk, Helen Pan, Vishwa Patel, Kayla Thai, Carolyn Yang and Jiawei Ryan Zhang, and advised by Assistant Principal Ann Mah and Teacher Loretta Ng.

SET was created as a way to advocate for the best possible learning environment for students. They volunteer countless hours outside their own studies to provide mental, emotional and academic support. This team runs a highly successful mentorship program—involving over 275 people—where every new student is paired with a senior student and given a Toolkit for Success, which helps new students learn more about the school and make their transition more successful. Other programs the SET team runs is peer tutoring, career fairs (where presenters from various professions talk to students about career prospects), a wellness fair, and workshops for both students and parents. Parent Hang Cai says, “I truly appreciate their time and effort on making all the events and activities well organized, informative, interesting and helpful.”

During the COVID-19 pandemic, this group has been exceptional. They created online YouTube videos for course registration and adapted their Toolkit for Success to include over seven videos to help students. They even organized online paint nights to keep students from all grades connected. One parent shared how as their son started Grade 10 during the COVID-19 pandemic, he was still connected to a mentor who reached out via email, helped him pick courses and learn about the school, and has been there to answer any questions their son may have. This parent also shared how they benefited from an online workshop SET organized. It was led by a psychologist and was geared to giving parents perspective and support during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The members of this team have left a lasting impact on the entire school community.

Recognition of Merit

CRITERIA: To recognize the outstanding achievement or exemplary performance of an individual parent or community member, student in Grades 7 to 12 or Division staff member who has demonstrated a standard of excellence in an area of endeavour. Focus is on achievements, leadership or contributions that are meritorious, innovative, creative, or inspiring and have brought distinction to the individual, the school, the community and the Division.

STAFF

Andy Connelly, Balwin School

Andy is described as caring and compassionate, and an energetic presence at Balwin School. He always finds time to listen and support students, staff and families while masterfully juggling many tasks in his role as Assistant Principal. He is an integral part of how Balwin School runs.

Andy was central to Balwin School's planning and crisis management during the COVID-19 pandemic. He sought engagement and collaboration on the school's crisis plan and re-entry plans that helped build a comprehensive return to school plan and allowed staff room for constant reflection and learning. Andy facilitated a collaborative planning committee where staff could provide insights to predict the challenges of the upcoming school year. Principal Christina Jones says, "His belief and focus on emergency preparedness and crisis management has been key to Balwin School's response planning."

A lifelong learner, Andy is also a champion of professional development—he continues to learn and implement valuable skills in his leadership practice. Andy plays a key role in the Learning Leaders Program in the M.E. LaZerte catchment—organizing activities and speakers that highlight different leadership journeys. "Andy is an amazing support for fostering leadership skills in his staff. He delegates tasks to staff members while continuing to support them on their leadership journey, allowing them to flourish under his mentorship," says Teacher Karla Tritten.

Andy's growth mindset and reflective nature make him a leader that staff wish to be around, to learn from and be inspired by. "Staff feel like they can go to him and share their thoughts. He values our honesty and knows that is how we move forward for the better," says Teacher Chanelle Cluett-Alstad.

Jeremy Brooks, Bessie Nichols

As Acting Principal, Jeremy has led Bessie Nichols School through some of the most challenging times the school has faced. He's an exceptional leader to both the staff team and students in the school.

Throughout the school year, he has been a visible presence in the classroom. "Our students are experiencing some of the most stressful times in their young lives and Mr. Brooks has led an amazing team with a calm, caring and direct approach," says Teacher Erin Kennedy.

When the COVID-19 pandemic began impacting schools in the spring, there was much uncertainty among parents and students alike. Jeremy's strong leadership and unwavering visible support for the entire school community was, and continues to be, a constant during these times. His regular communication, updates and check-ins make students, families and staff feel at ease—showing how much he cares for students and how committed he is to keeping everyone safe.

"Mr. Brooks is frequently the first person to greet our family in the morning, extremely approachable and sets the positive tone for students, parents and staff," says parent Kathy Spiller. "His friendly and supportive presence is always noticed and he provides an extremely welcoming, inclusive and high quality school environment."

Nicole Beart, Britannia School

Nicole is a compassionate teacher, innovative leader and dedicated youth advocate. An intervention teacher and community co-ordinator, Nicole was primarily responsible for establishing a medical clinic for Britannia School students and the greater community. She is described as a fierce advocate who goes above and beyond to remove the barriers that prevent students from attending or being successful in school.

Nicole brought various community agencies to the table to address the need for access to quality medical care for individual students, their families and the community. In partnership with Boyle McCauley Health Clinic and the Edmonton West Primary Care Network, the West End Kids and Family Clinic opened in June 2019, inside the West End Boys and Girls Club.

"Nicole saw a need and acted out of compassion and concern to develop a solution. I was inspired by her commitment and feel she truly made a difference in the lives of students and their families," says Lori Deverdenne, Manager of Clinical Services, Edmonton West Primary Care Network.

As an educator, Nicole develops lasting, meaningful relationships with students and earns their trust. Her calm and gentle demeanor creates a feeling of acceptance and security that students respond to.

Principal Jason Smith says, "Nicole's contribution to the school and her unwavering commitment to meeting the needs of students and families had made a significant positive impact on our school and community and we are endlessly grateful for all that she has done for the school."

Recognition of Merit *continued*

Elizabeth Mauger, Ellerslie Campus

Elizabeth, a brilliant and creative art teacher, is committed to innovating, creating and inspiring students and staff at Ellerslie Campus to participate in making the school a beautiful place. Elizabeth inspires all students, artists or not, to step out of their comfort zone and to develop a passion for art.

Elizabeth's love of art and her creativity shows not only in her classroom, but well beyond too. She goes the extra mile to host weekly art clubs for students to work on special art projects—something many students look forward to. Elizabeth also hosts art activities for staff on professional development days and an after-school staff art club which is a “great way for staff to take some time to unwind, be creative and connect with each other,” says Educational Assistant Marianne Hill.

In particular, Elizabeth beautifies the school regularly with student art, spending hours upon hours decorating the school for every season, holiday and special occasion.

“From student-made posters about identity in September to pumpkins in October to holiday decorations in the winter, Elizabeth enhances and fosters the creative and aesthetic climate of our school,” says Teacher Joyce Chaykoski. Teacher Rebecca Baba says, “It is like walking through a gallery. The walls, the lockers and bulletin boards are always filled with student-created art that helps bring life to the walls of our school, pride in our students' hearts and brings smiles to everyone's faces [and] happiness to all.”

Toni Sartorelli, Johnny Bright School

Toni's dedication to her students and exemplary ability to adapt to changing environments was evident in how she supported both students and families in the transition to online learning in spring 2020.

From the spring to the end of the school year, Toni held daily meets—she did small break out sessions and group lessons, and communicated with students and parents about the expectations of learning. She continued to provide high quality educational opportunities to each student while maintaining the close relationships she had established with them throughout the year. Principal Kathleen Marzolf says, “Toni strives for excellence as she challenges each student to reach their full potential.”

“Words cannot express the admiration I have for Ms. Sartorelli's skills as an educator and for her dedication as a teacher. I feel that she not only met, but went far above and beyond expectations when learning went online,” says parent Wendy Gillespie.

‘Above and beyond’ is a common theme among parents when they speak about Toni and her care for her students. She reached out to students and families with phone calls to provide reassurance and answer questions about online learning—“it meant the world to our family,” says parent Mimma De Lilla-Hines.

“I feel that the level of passion, for her students and their families, Ms. Sartorelli displayed on a regular basis is truly commendable and completely appreciated,” says parent Jacqueline Pack. Parents Rhiannon and Ryan Hoyle say, “Ms. Sartorelli has taken on the challenges in education during a pandemic with courage, commitment and grace. Our son is not only thriving academically, but his desire to learn, engage with his teacher and classmates is stronger than ever!”

Lisa Casillas, M.E. LaZerte School

Lisa has been a youth worker at M.E. LaZerte since fall 2019 and made an immediate impact on staff and students with her positive attitude and enthusiasm. Student Gladys Bull says, “During my high school years at LaZerte, hanging out with Lisa has been the highlight. She led me onto the right path, always reminded me of my capabilities and how I could do so much more.”

“She constantly “leads from where she sits,” and takes on new initiatives and responsibilities voluntarily and with great enthusiasm,” says Department Head of Student Services Thomas Gillard.

In particular, Lisa recognized a need to help students facing food insecurity. She came up with creative ways to allow students in need to access healthy lunches and snacks by leveraging grant money, the school cafeteria and seeking donations from a local grocery store.

With the unprecedented challenges that the pandemic brought, Lisa recognized how COVID-19 restrictions impacted the community’s most vulnerable students. She co-ordinated a food hamper project in partnership with Steele Heights Baptist Church. Together, with the support of the local community and businesses, they raised \$20,000 for the food hamper program. Lisa took the lead on connecting with families and arranging food deliveries bringing a comforting presence to students and their families who were isolated because of COVID-19 restrictions. Through this initiative, several hundred food hampers were delivered to families and individuals in the school, church and local community.

“Her love and genuine care for her students were matched only by her hard work and commitment to the program,” says Darren Platt, Senior Pastor, Steele Heights Baptist Church.

Student Lekesha Calliou says, “Ever since she started at the school with her bright light, she has, and always will, help us work towards our goals and to always reach for the stars even when things get tough.”

Recognition of Merit *continued*

Bernice Pui, Queen Elizabeth School

As the Technology Department Head at Queen Elizabeth School, Bernice is described as a true leader in technology in her school. Retired Assistant Principal Brenda Scadden says, “Bernice’s innovative use of technology and her plethora of instructional and assessment practices, have ignited an excitement in her colleagues and students alike.”

When in-person classes were cancelled in spring 2020, Bernice recognized the unique way she could serve her fellow educators and students, and she stepped up to provide guidance and resources to support the shift to online learning.

Bernice created videos and step-by-step tutorials on the applications and technology that teachers and students would rely on during online instruction. She created a central place for all staff to access links, videos, documents and contacts of staff who could help with technology questions. As well, she co-ordinated lending and tracking Chromebooks, cameras and microphones to staff and students. She designed and provided formal instructional professional leadership on technology integration holding online sessions during lunch and after school.

Bernice shouldered all of this because of her sense of professional community and collegiality. Her work and dedication to support staff and students during the pandemic exceeded all expectations. Teacher Bette Yelich says, “Not only did Bernice continue to teach her classes in an outstanding manner, she also helped so many staff to gain expertise as well.”

“She is selfless, kind and always willing to help,” says Teacher Tanya Buhlmann. “She has helped so many of us and I don’t think our comfort and the students’ success would have been what it was had it not been for her.”

Margaret Flynn, Vimy Ridge Academy

Margaret is the artistic director and founder of the Edmonton School of Ballet and her 25-year contribution to students at both Bonnie Doon High School and Vimy Ridge Academy has brought unparalleled opportunities for students to explore their skills and passion for dance.

In a long-standing partnership with Vimy Ridge Academy, the Edmonton School of Ballet provides students access to professional coaching staff in the art of dance through skill development that’s unmatched in any other school in the province.

Margaret is described as an inspiration to all in the dance community. She creates a culture that has a family feel—where mentorship is embedded between older and younger students, and experienced and new instructors. Both students and staff at the Edmonton School of Ballet at Vimy Ridge Academy express deep gratitude, deep connection, and deep commitment to the values instilled through their lessons.

Margaret gives time, energy, patience and discipline to ensure all students can succeed and works to eliminate the barriers for youth to continue to engage in dance programming. She finds solutions to ensure all students are successful regardless of circumstances and has led significant numbers of students to a career pathway of dignity, success and fulfilment.

“Mrs. Margaret Flynn has the ability to see the spark inside a person, ignite the gifts within, and provide the encouragement, the support, and the environment needed to feed the flame of talent,” says Teacher Tina Covlin Dewart.

Rick Stanley, Westmount School

Although Rick is the Principal of Ross Sheppard this year, he was nominated for his transformational influence as Principal at Westmount School and in the community last year. His innovative leadership, commitment and dedication to inclusion has ensured that Westmount School is a place respected by students, staff, families and community alike, and where everyone feels welcome.

“He takes pride in the school and generates an amazing culture of support and learning. Teachers are encouraged to think outside of the box and to teach what they are passionate about,” says Teacher Amanda Rupp.

Described as an inspiring change-maker whose dedication to all families at the school runs deep, Rick places huge importance on community and relationships—his door is always open. He continually seeks out and forges strong links with the greater community. At the beginning of his time at Westmount, Rick took a student-centred approach to addressing root causes of issues—he met students where they were at. He hosted pizza parties and ice cream sundaes for attendance, celebrated cultural diversity by showcasing specific Indigenous performances, inspired a Black History Month movement within the school, and provided students with opportunities for growth. He instituted an unprecedented level of options that inspired both staff and students.

Parent Shauna Gibbons says, “His leadership invites parents into meaningful contributions to the school community. Most importantly, his leadership inspires students to want to learn.”

With the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic brought to schools, Rick “was the steady ship leading us forward,” says parent Stephanie Koska. Rick facilitated a smooth transition to online learning for students and families—he led his community with confidence, keeping staff and students on the same path together.

Recognition of Merit *continued*

PARENT/COMMUNITY

Dr. Louise Hayes, Edmonton Public Schools Foundation

When the Edmonton Public Schools Foundation started in 2010, Louise was elected as the first chair of the Foundation Board and served in that role for a decade. During her tenure as chair, she worked with the Foundation Board to raise awareness about investing in early learning intervention through full-day Kindergarten programming for children who come to the classroom at a disadvantage.

As a result of her thoughtful leadership, six full-day Kindergarten classrooms were funded and continue to be supported at Beacon Heights, Calder, Lauderdale, Mee-Yah-Noh, Princeton and Tipaskan schools.

Louise's extraordinary gift is her ability to connect people with causes that are near and dear to their hearts. For 10 years, Louise has shared her time, talent, wisdom, humour, historical knowledge and willingness to help in whatever way is needed. Louise is a true champion of the Division's littlest learners.

"Her dedication to our cause of leveling the playing field for children who come to the classroom at a disadvantage is unparalleled," says Foundation Director Emmy Stuebing.

The Foundation Board and staff are incredibly grateful for all of Louise's contributions. To honour and acknowledge the tremendous contribution Louise has made to so many, the Foundation has introduced the Dr. Louise Hayes Champion for Kids Award.

This recognition will be presented to an individual who, like Louise, has demonstrated outstanding commitment to help level the playing field for children who come to the classroom at a disadvantage.

STUDENT

Speena Dalal, Lillian Osborne School

Speena's dedication to her school and community is truly exceptional. She selflessly gives her time and expertise to contribute to causes that positively impact her community all while maintaining a full International Baccalaureate academic timetable with honours throughout her high school academics.

She is an active member of the school community—supporting through event planning, volunteering at the school's Open House and as an integral part of the school's debate club. A talented and well-decorated debater, Speena has represented her school in regional, provincial and national competitions. Speena is the captain of the Lillian Osborne Debate Team and volunteers to support and mentor new members to the team while still competing in debate meets across Canada. Speena was recognized with a 2020 MP Youth Leadership Award for her outstanding leadership in her school and community.

Principal Bryan Radmanovich says “Not only does Speena show a commitment to her studies and our school community, but she has also continued to develop as a learner, thus exemplifying what we would like to see from all of our students here at Lillian Osborne High School.”

Speena's volunteerism at both Lillian Osborne and in the wider community is admirable and extensive. Speena has spearheaded the KidsForKids initiative at Lillian Osborne to support KidSport through fundraising and raising awareness. Speena has also volunteered as a City of Edmonton Youth Council member providing information and advice to Edmonton's City Council about issues involving or affecting youth. As an International Student Peer Mentor, she uses her fluency in multiple languages to aid in international students' transitions to their new school in Canada.

“She exemplifies the attributes of a leader in our school community by both her actions and positive attitude,” says Department Head of Social Studies William Robertson.

You're making a difference!

Congratulations to the students, staff and community members who have been recognized in the Edmonton Public Schools' Division Recognition 2019–20 program. Your contributions to our schools and, most importantly, to bettering the lives of our students mean so much.

We are thrilled to see **Dr. Louise Hayes** receive a Merit Award, recognizing her remarkable 10 years serving as chair of the Edmonton Public Schools Foundation Board of Directors. She has been instrumental in strengthening our mandate and has made a tremendous difference in the lives of the students we support.

Like so many of this year's award recipients, the Foundation is working to make a difference in the lives of students by raising funds and awareness to level the playing field for children who come to the classroom at a disadvantage.

To learn more about our work or to become involved, please visit foundation.epsb.ca.

 EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Thank You.

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