



**For Immediate Release: April 30, 2020**  
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## **Intermediate Teacher Named Woodland's Gurnee Teacher of the Year**

Gurnee, IL - Fifth grade Advanced Math and Language Arts teacher Kathy Shinnars has been named one of the Village of Gurnee Teachers of the Year for 2020. Shinnars, along with the winning teachers from Warren Township High School and Gurnee District 56, will be recognized by the village with an official plaque, and a grant for \$1,000 from the Henderson Foundation.

Kathy Shinnars began her teaching career in 1987 at Woodland Junior High, after graduating from the University of Illinois with a double major in English and Elementary Education. She has been a teacher in the district for more than 30 years!

Shinnars explained, "Each year, my goal is to create a classroom that is a safe place for collaboration and academic risk-taking. I want students to discover a delight in learning that stays with them long after they leave my class. I am inspired every day by these brilliant 5th grade advanced students and I want them to see that if you fill the day with laughter, hard work can feel like having fun!"



Woodland opened the Teacher of the Year nomination period in January. Staff, students, families and community members were invited to submit nominations for teachers and staff that go above and beyond to support Woodland's learning community, and who truly live #LifeintheW. We received nearly 500 nominations in a matter of a few weeks.

From the nomination forms submitted for Mrs. Shinnars, it is clear that she recognizes every child has unique stories and gifts to share, and she uses that to bring out the best in them. Her ability to connect with students and their families is one of the things that makes her such a great teacher. She is beloved by current and former students and stays in contact with them to see where their path will take them.



Mrs. Shinnars was surprised with a car parade in front of her house complete with a Woodland school bus, and even Wiley the Wildcat was there to cheer her on. The Village of Gurnee also made it official with an announcement on the Thursday morning "Gurnee's Got It Radio Show" on 102.3 XCL.

Intermediate Principal Derek Straight said, “I am happy to work with such a dedicated teacher who not only supports her students, but also supports their parents and her co-workers too. Kathy is passionate, and it is clear that teaching is a calling for her. When I was reading the comments from those that nominated her, I found myself enthusiastically nodding my head in agreement. Students said they feel safe in her class, they love her, and they are excited to go to her class every day. She makes all students feel like they belong. She deserves this recognition and we are very proud of her.”

Woodland selects a school winner from each of the five schools in the district. From the list of five finalists, an overall winner is selected for recognition as the Village of Gurnee’s Teacher of the Year. This year’s school finalists were:

- Mrs. Concidine, Woodland Primary
- Mrs. LeFevre, Woodland Elementary East
- Mrs. Parrott, Woodland Elementary West
- Mr. Thompson, Woodland Middle School

Dr. Lori Casey, Acting Superintendent stated, “The Village of Gurnee started the Teacher of the Year program in 2014 and it is heartwarming to read the nominations from parents, students and fellow staff members. Our staff looks forward to this friendly competition each year, and it fosters a strong sense of community. We appreciate the Village and the Henderson Foundation for their dedication to recognizing and supporting extraordinary teachers from the three school districts.”

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