Thank you for joining us.

We hope you enjoyed the 11th Annual Evening of Excellence.

Thursday, June 15, 2017

Radisson Colonial Hotel
Helena, Montana
Message from Executive Director, Kirk Miller

Welcome to the 11th Annual Evening of Excellence celebrating the achievements of those who have chosen to serve the children of our great state.

To our honorees, thank you for your commitment to the profession that truly makes a difference for the future of our children, community, state and nation.

We would like to give special thanks to our sponsor, VALIC, who has been a partner of SAM and its members for over 30 years. We appreciate their continued support of our members!

SAM EXECUTIVE BOARD

SAM President: Jon Konen
SAM President-Elect: Laurie Barron
SAM Past President: Paul Furthmyre
MASS President: Tobin Novasio
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MASSP President: Joel Graves
MCASE President: Karen Underwood
MACSS President: Linda Marsh
META President: Rich Lawrence
Dave Wick
Vice President - National Association of Elementary School Principals

Dave Wick is the Principal at Columbia Falls Junior High School. Dave was recently elected as the Vice President of the National Association of Elementary School Principals.

Dave describes the principalship as being a very challenging, complex profession yet essential to the educational leadership within a school. In every one of the schools he has visited during his career, he has seen dedicated professionals who have given their all to a common goal—student success. However, one thing has been a common thread: Great schools need great principals!

Vice President Wick believes that the public school is the last truly democratic institution left in our society. Students who come from any background, ethnic group, socioeconomic status, religion, or ability have the opportunity to become anything and anyone they want to be. Every day in our schools, the expertise and energy of over three million teachers is given to their students. Each day, school personnel look to their principals for leadership, encouragement, and inspiration. Dave Wick is proud to be a principal!
Awards Ceremony

**Welcome**
Kirk Miller, SAM Executive Director

**Dinner**
Sponsored by VALIC

**Keynote Address**
Dave Wick, Vice President of NAESP - Principal of Columbia Falls Junior High School

**Presentation of Awards - Presenter**
SAM G. V. Erickson Award - Kirk Miller
MASS Superintendent of the Year - Laurie Barron
MASSP Principal of the Year - Dan Kimzey
MASSP Assistant Principal of the Year - Dan Kimzey
MASC School Administrator of the Year - Pat Audet
MCASE Special Ed. Director of the Year - Karen Underwood
MCASE Special Educator of the Year - Karen Underwood
MCASE General Educator of the Year - Karen Underwood
MPTF Presidential Award for Math and Science - Kirk Miller
MASBO Outstanding Business Official of the Year - Kirk Miller
MSCA Counselor of the Year - Pat Audet
MACSS/MSSA Rural Teacher of the Year - Jessica McWilliams
MIAAA Overall Athletic Director of the Year - Pat Audet
MEA-MFT Montana Teacher of the Year - Kirk Miller
MEA-MFT Ed. Support Professional of the Year - Kirk Miller
META Technologist of the Year - Rich Lawrence
MAEMSP Distinguished Principal of the Year - Jon Konen
MIEA Teacher of the Year - Pat Audet
MIEA Educator of the Year - Pat Audet
MASN School Nurse of the Year - Kirk Miller

MASN School Nurse of the Year

The Montana Association of School Nurses is honored to recognize the unsung heroes exhibiting leadership and creating a culture of wellness in their schools. This award recognizes excellence in school nursing and promotes the importance of school nurses.

**Erica Harp, School Nurse**
**Great Falls Public Schools**
**Great Falls**

Erica Harp was born and raised in Great Falls, MT. Erica graduated from Charles M. Russell High School and attended college in Spokane Washington where she received her Bachelors in Science of Nursing from Whitworth University and Washington State University. Erica has been a nurse for 11 years. She began her career in emergency medicine working in Atlanta, GA, Spokane, WA, and Great Falls, MT.

In 2011 she was hired for the Lead Nurse position for Great Falls Public Schools and fell in love with school nursing. Erica has continued in her role helping to coordinate health services for the GFPS district and overseeing other school nurses. The nursing department of GFPS has grown from 3 part-time staff nurse positions to now 9 part-time staff nurses. Erica takes great pride in the profession of school nursing and its role of serving students, families, schools, and the greater community. She is active in efforts to promote wellness for both the staff and students of Great Falls Public Schools and is an advocate for promoting the school wellness policy.

Erica has been an active member of the Montana Association of School Nurses since 2012. She has served on several committees within the association to include the MT Kids with Diabetes Collaborative, establishing a web-based resource manual for MT School Nurses, and serving as a representative on the MASN Board. Erica also serves her local community through efforts with Great Falls Action for Healthy Kids, Get Fit Great Falls, and Uptown Optimist. Erica is married to Travis Harp and they have a 1 ½ year old daughter, Hannah. They are both happy to be living in their hometown.
The G.V. Erickson award is given to a member of the School Administrators of Montana who has made the greatest contribution to the betterment of education in Montana. The award is named after Mr. G. V. Erickson, a school administrator who dedicated his career and life to education and the children of Montana.

Rob Watson, Superintendent
Bozeman School District
Bozeman

In July 2012, Dr. Rob Watson was selected to serve as the Superintendent of Bozeman Public Schools. Previously, Rob served as Principal of Bozeman High School (2009-2012), as a middle and high school principal in Missoula County Public Schools (2001-2009). Rob has also worked as a school administrator in Great Falls and began his career as a math and science teacher in Anchorage, Alaska.

Rob has a Bachelor’s degree in Secondary Education from Montana State University - Bozeman, a Master's degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Alaska, and received his Doctorate in Educational Leadership from the University of Montana in 2009. Currently, Rob is serving on the Advisory Board to the Phyllis J. Washington College of Education at The University of Montana. Rob also serves as a board member for several local organizations: the Bozeman Public Library Foundation, Bozeman Deaconess Hospital, and Greater Gallatin United Way. Rob was in the inaugural group, joining 27 fellow superintendents from around the country, to achieve National Superintendent Certification in February 2015. In 2016, Rob was honored by the School Administrators of Montana with the GV Erickson Award - the highest recognition given to a school administrator for notable service and dedication.

Rob believes that providing leadership for the local education community is important in establishing opportunities to help all students succeed.

The Montana Indian Education Association annually honors an educator that provides American Indian students with a high quality education that is based on cultural traditions.

Janice Wilson, Teacher
Wyola Schools
Wyola

Janice Wilson has taught Crow culture at Wyola School for 15 years. The individuals who nominated her described the many projects she is involved in.

She teaches community night classes for individuals who wish to learn how to make elk teeth dresses, leggings and horse gear. At Wyola School, she teaches Crow language, traditional music, and classic Crow art forms for each grade level. She teaches students how to make Crow dolls with appropriate traditional clothing. At Christmas, she teaches students Christmas songs in the Crow Language which they perform for the community. She plans and organizes extensive learning experiences during Native American Week and throughout the month of October, writing grants in order to raise necessary funding for such activities. She teaches students Crown lullabies, which they sing at other schools and community events. She brings community members to the school to teach students skills such as beading, painting, spear throwing, pan bread making, pemmican recipes, Native games, teepee raising and the significance of the placement of the teepee poles. While many look to Janice Wilson as an expert in Crow Studies, she continues her own learning of Crow culture. She does so, because she understands the importance of passing the knowledge on to the younger generations.

What is most notable about Janice Wilson are the things students have to say about her.

“Mrs. Wilson is the best culture teacher.”

“I could not speak Crow before I came to school and had Mrs. Wilson for a culture teacher. We learn new vocabulary every day.”

“Mrs. Wilson teaches us everything we need to know about Crow culture.”

“Mrs. Wilson tells us stories and we write the stories and draw pictures to go with the story. My favorite is, Pretty Shield, Medicine Woman of the Crows. We speak Crow in her class.”
The Montana Indian Education Association annually honors a teacher that provides American Indian students with a high quality education that is based on cultural traditions.

Jordann Lankford, Teacher
Sandstone Elementary
Billings

Jordann was born and raised in Great Falls, Montana. She graduated from the University of Montana in 2012.

After working in Sunburst for two years, Jordann became the American Indian Academic Achievement Coach for Great Falls Public Schools. During her first year in Great Falls, she received the 5 Under 35 Award from KRTV that recognizes young professionals, working to improve their community.

In 2015, Jordann was asked to join Montana’s Superintendent Denise Juneau’s administration for her last year in office, as the Graduation Matters Program Assistant, focusing on the graduation of students in Indian Country. During that time, she received the Governor’s Award of Excellence.

Currently, Jordann is back in Great Falls as an American Indian Academic Achievement Coach. She facilitates an alternative program for American Indian students focused of graduation, college, and/or career readiness.
Gordon Klasna is in his sixth year as Principal of Eileen Johnson Middle School in Lockwood. He previously served as an Associate Principal at Riverside Middle School and an Assistant Principal at West High in Billings.

Before becoming an administrator he was a Choral Director at Fergus High School, Lewistown Junior High, Hermiston High School in Hermiston, OR and at the Boys and Girls Ranch in Billings. He is a graduate of Laurel High School, University of Mary and University of Montana.

Gordon’s wife of 22 years, Sheri, would say that middle school is a perfect fit for him because in some ways he has never left. They have two children, Caleb who just completed his first year at Montana State University and Areya who will be a senior at Billings Senior next year. He also teaches Music Theory on the Montana Digital Academy and represents Lockwood on the Billings School Board.

Sue Sweeney is the principal at Broadwater Elementary School in Helena, MT and has been for the past nine years. Prior to this position, she was the K-6 principal at Philipsburg Elementary School and the 7-8 principal at Philipsburg Junior High School. After graduating from Montana State University, Sue started her career teaching 2nd grade in Valier, MT. She taught 2nd grade in Dillon, MT and K-4 in Hall, MT. A first grade position opened in Philipsburg, and while teaching first grade, she received her Master’s Degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Montana.

Sue's first administrative assignment was a half time principal/half time 5th grade teacher in Philipsburg. After realizing that both of those jobs were really full time, she was moved to a full time principal position. Sue was a Fulbright Memorial Teacher Fund recipient in 2007 and traveled to Japan to study education, culture and language.

Sue and her husband, Mark, enjoy hiking, skiing, kayaking and traveling together. They also love spending as much time as possible with their grandson, Weston. Sue has two daughters, Brandi and Carly and two step-daughters, Shannon and Jordan.
Shanna Smith grew up on a family cattle ranch in Melrose, Montana which is nestled in the mountains of southwest Montana. She attended Beaverhead County High School in Dillon and Montana State University-Bozeman on a basketball scholarship. After competing for the Lady Cats, she became an assistant coach with the women’s basketball program.

In 2001, Shanna joined the high school ranks as an English teacher and basketball coach in Three Forks. Seven years later, Shanna moved to Belgrade and taught English in the Alternative High School and middle school and continued as the girls’ basketball coach. She was awarded the Gold Star for Excellence in Education during the 2013-2014 school year.

Shanna earned her Master’s Degree in 2014 and was hired as the assistant principal at Belgrade High School that same year.

Russ Hendrickson has been in public education for over 23 years. He began as a math/computer science teacher for the Corvallis School District in Montana in 1994. During his tenure he also served as an assistant principal and the District Technology Director. He spent 19 years coaching football and wrestling. He was the president of the Corvallis Community Events Center Foundation which spearheaded a successful project to build a community park, playground soccer complex, football stadium and rubberized track funded through grants, donations and fund raisers.

Mr. Hendrickson has been a board member for the Montana Educational Technology Association (META) since its inception and recently finished his term as president, helping Montana to become a Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) affiliate. He currently is serving as past president of META and is the Chair of the META CoSN Council.

Mr. Hendrickson is currently the Senior Information Systems Manager for Missoula County Public Schools. He was also awarded the 2017 Outstanding Technology Leader of the Year by the Northwest Council for Computer Education (NCCE).
The Montana Association of Student Councils recognizes an administrator in Montana who shows exceptional support and commitment to the student council and student activities in his or her school. This individual is one who values student voice and participation in his or her school and who supports the development of student leaders in his or her school.

Rex Ternan, Principal
Red Lodge High School
Red Lodge

This is Rex’ 20th year serving as principal for Red Lodge High School. He has been in education for the better part of 27 years. After receiving his Bachelors of Science in Agriculture Education from Montana State University, his first eight years were spent in the classroom teaching Agriculture Education in both Florida and Alaska public school districts. Upon receiving his Master’s in Education Leadership from Montana State University in Bozeman in 1997, he was fortunate to obtain the high school principal position in Red Lodge where he raised his son, Lane.

One of his primary goals during his tenure was to make Red Lodge High School exceptional. Because of an incredible team of teachers and a supportive community they succeeded. They have built a new high school campus, transitioned from a controversial mascot name to become the Rams, and have consistently earned the Silver Medal award status for the past several years from the U.S. News “Best High Schools” currently ranking eighth in the state of Montana for 2017 and second in the previous year. They have instilled a strong passion and reputation for preparing their students for college and career readiness and being recognized on a state and national stage speaks to the consistent quality of teachers, strong community support and most importantly strong student success.

Throughout his administrative career in Red Lodge, he has been involved with numerous district and community organizations and served in various coordinator roles, facilitated a number of innovative education programs, and played a critical role in many aspects of educational professional development. A few highlights include, serving as past director of the Montana Association of Secondary School Principals-Region VI, served as President of the State Class B Principal’s Association, served as Vice-President of the Beartooth Hospital Foundation Board of Directors, founding member and volunteer of the Red Lodge Youth Council, founding member and volunteer of the Red Lodge Community Builders Organization, founding member and volunteer of the Red Lodge Community “We-Can-We-Care” Committee, and founding member and volunteer of the Celebration of Youth Awards Program-RL Boys and Girls Club.

Rex views a collaborative school environment as the key to creating successful teachers and students. He believes partnerships with parents and community is essential to enriching the experience. Rex feels that the best part of his job is greeting students in the morning as they enter the high school, serving lunch to students and visiting the students in all areas of the school. He prides himself in getting to know every student, which is why he loves working in a smaller school environment.
MCASE Special Education Director of the Year Award

The Montana Council of Administrators of Special Education Director of the Year Award honors a “director” who offers innovative and effective programs that have positively influenced the field of special education and have impacted services to exceptional children.

Ginny Haines, Special Education Coordinator
Missoula County Public Schools
Missoula

Ginny has been providing Special Education leadership and support to staff, students and families in Missoula for 6 years. Prior to working for MCPS, Ginny was the Special Services Director for Corvallis School District for 14 years and a special education & Title I teacher for 5 years.

Ginny is a past co-president of MCASE, has participated in Delegate Assembly and been active in CSPD.

MEA-MFT Montana Teacher of the Year Award

The Montana Teacher of the Year Award honors an exceptionally skillful, dedicated teacher who has earned the respect of students, parents, and colleagues; who stays abreast of current educational theory and practice; who works well with fellow professionals; and whose contributions to education transcend the classroom.

Kelly Elder, Social Studies Teacher
CR Anderson Middle School
Helena

Kelly Elder is a sixth grade social studies teacher at CR Anderson Middle School in Helena. He has been teaching in Montana for over 20 years.

Kelly uses current events to connect with kids and uses hand-on research projects to teach his students about the world. He works hard to connect with every student in the classroom and believes that teachers can rely on each other to make all the students at school feel welcome.

Kelly says he owes a lot to his colleagues because teaching is a collaborative effort. He portrays the profession as extremely demanding, leading to burnout for some new teachers, but for those who have been in the profession for a long time can lend great support to new colleagues.

Kelly's approach to teaching is to get kids excited, intrigues, and motivated. He knows that he has succeeded if his students continually question and desire to learn more. Kelly is a National Board Certified teacher who creates relationships with his students making them feel valued. He says this is the key to teaching.

As the 2017 Montana Teacher of the Year, Kelly has served as an ambassador for public education and represented Montana in the National Teacher of the Year program.

As not only a teacher but also as an advocate of students, Kelly leads in rides for the Dynamos Mountain Biking Club, a youth mountain biking program for students from around Helena and is a student council advisor.
MIAAAA Overall Athletic Director of the Year

For the AD of the year award, there are nominees in each school classification of AA, A, B, and C. Each classification has an award recipient, and there is an overall award given to the best AD of the state. Each winner is chosen by the board of the Montana Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association.

Mike Savageau, Activities Director
Three Forks School District

Mike has been teaching for 33 years, 11 at Harrison High School and 22 at Three Forks High School. He is currently the Girls Basketball coach and athletic director. In 2001, his boys' team won the Class B State Championship and his teams have gone to the State Tournament 10 times, including this year's Girls Basketball team, placing third.

Mike has been athletic director for 29 years and was named Class B Athletic Director of the Year in 2008. He is the MIAAA Overall Athletic Director of the Year for 2017. Mike is married to his wife Nancy and they have two daughters, Katie and Allie.

MCASE Special Educator of the Year

The Montana Council of Administrators of Special Education Special Educator of the Year Award honors an educator who offers innovative and effective programs that have positively influenced the field of special education and have impacted services to exceptional children.

Melissa Lane, Special Education Teacher
Saddle Peak Elementary School
Belgrade

Melissa Lane was born and raised in Sidney, MT. She grew up babysitting, lifeguarding and instructing swim lessons for children and adults of all ages and abilities. Some of her fondest memories are teaching swim lessons to young adults who had disabilities. She has always had a great love for working with children and helping children who had special needs.

Throughout her experiences growing up she realized that her passion was to teach special education. She has always been the type of person who wants to help anyone anyway she can. She went on to attend Montana State University in Bozeman, MT where she received her bachelor's degree in Elementary Education. She simultaneously attended MSU Billings in order to attain her special education degree. She continued with graduate school at MSU Billings where she received her Master’s degree in Special Education, Advanced Studies. She worked with many students throughout her college experience and continued working at Longfellow Elementary in Bozeman, MT while completing her Master's Degree and Internship work.

Her first teaching job was in Belgrade, MT where she started the elementary Lifeskills Program at Heck/Quaw Elementary. She has remained in Belgrade, MT teaching special education and has now taken the Lifeskills Program to Saddle Peak Elementary where she just completed her 10th year. She continues to expand her knowledge with schooling and trainings to better her teaching skills and provide the best education possible for her students. She loves what she does! She feels that working with her students and seeing their growth and progress is the most rewarding experience in the world!
Special Education is a difficult and rewarding field. There are many outstanding professionals throughout the state -- special education administrators, special education teachers, specialists and classroom teachers who deserve the recognition and support for their efforts.

Three winners were chosen for the 2017 MCASE General Educator of the Year Award:

Rachel Cutler, Principal
Valley View Elementary School
Great Falls

Bobby Ingalls, Principal
Chief Joseph Elementary
Great Falls

Kim Ray, Principal
Loy Elementary School
Great Falls

Jill Wilson, Teacher
Woodman Elementary School
Lolo

Jill is currently teaching 3rd-5th grades and 4th-8th specials at Woodman School. This is her 10th teaching year at Woodman. Before that, she taught 3 years in Elk City, ID and also worked as a Fire Prevention Educator and did wildland fire suppression for the Nez Perce N.F.

She received her teaching credentials from Lewis-Clark State College in Lewiston, Idaho.

Jill enjoys the outdoors and is always finding ways to teach outside. She has taught at many summer camps, coached basketball, was a 4-H survival leader, is a NASP instructor, and is currently the MBI Youth coordinator with middle school students at Woodman as well as a hunter/bow hunter instructor for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks. She also is an EF Tour group leader; taking students to Belize in June 2018.

Jill was chosen as the 2017 Montana Rural Teacher of the Year. She enjoys many experiences with her husband, Mark; sons, Jace and Trevor; and their yellow lab, Tank in the great outdoors.

Jill says, “Adventures await me every day--the world truly is my classroom! Lifelong learning is essential.”
Jessica Anderson, Science Teacher
Powell County High School
Deer Lodge

Jessica Anderson, the 2016 Montana Teacher of the Year, taught science at Powell County High School in Deer Lodge, MT prior to taking an instructional coaching position this school year. Jessica found success early in her career when she was chosen nationally as one of eleven Better Lesson Blended Learning Master Teachers and as a PBS Lead Digital Innovator (top 30). Recently, she received the NEA Teaching Excellence Award and was honored at NEA’s annual gala in Washington D.C.

This year Jessica has become quite the world traveler. In addition to traveling to China this summer through the NEA Global Fellowship program, she will be supporting native teachers in Dubai to incorporate STEM education into their classrooms. Additionally, Jessica was named a state finalist for the 2015 Presidential Award for Excellence in Math and Science Teaching (PAEMST) and was recognized in Washington D.C. with the national PAEMST award for science teaching in Montana. She is the co-founder/moderator of #MTedchat, a participant-driven education chat on Twitter. Jessica is currently a doctoral student at Walden University and hopes to do her dissertation work on virtual coaching and rural education.

Erica Zins, Counselor
Sentinel High School
Missoula

Erica Zins is currently in her 15th year as a school counselor. She has worked in the elementary and middle schools and is now in her 3rd year at Sentinel High School. Erica served as the secretary for the Montana School Counselors Association from 2009-2016 and as the treasurer for the 2014-2015 school year.

She is a member of the American School Counselor Association and Montana School Counselor Association. Erica has also facilitated a District School Counselor Leadership Team for the past 5 years and helped to create the MCPS K-12 Comprehensive School Counseling Program.

Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching

The award was established in 1983 by the Education for Economic Security Act and is given annually to math and science teachers across the United States who make outstanding contributions to their students and schools. It is administered by the Montana Professional Teaching Foundation.

MSCA Counselor of the Year

The Montana School Counselor Association’s award honors school counselors and administrators for their outstanding efforts in working with Montana’s youth. The award acknowledges the quality of service he/she provides students, families, school and districts in which he/she works.
MASBO Outstanding Business Official of the Year Award

This award recognizes the indispensable role school business officials play in educating children and for their commitment to the children, taxpayers and general Montana education community.

Jeannette Nelson, Business Manager
Fort Benton School District
Fort Benton

Jeannette Nelson has been the District Clerk/Business Manager at Fort Benton Public Schools for 40 years. Along with the numerous on-going duties required of a school business official, Jeannette is noted for her work organizing and providing the district’s Adult Education program, remodeling the school’s concessions area, serving as cheerleading sponsor and chaperone for student field trips, and fundraising for various student activities and causes.

Her regular attendance at MASBO and MTSBA trainings enables her to mentor and assist other clerks in small, rural schools with budgets and TFS reports. She also helps other clerks with questions about their accounting and payroll software. Jeannette is very involved with her community, serving as President of the local Jaycees chapter and as a director on the Rainbow Board. In these roles, she’s helped with many projects and fundraisers.

Her nominators describe Jeannette as loyal, diplomatic, efficient, cool, hardworking, positive and “the best.” Says Jeannette: “I love this district and have dedicated most of my career to help promote education, our school and the students.”

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President Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching

The award was established in 1983 by the Education for Economic Security Act and is given annually to math and science teachers across the United States who make outstanding contributions to their students and schools. It is administered by the Montana Professional Teaching Foundation.

Kerry Gruizenga, Math Teacher
Skyview High School
Billings

Kerry Gruizenga has taught mathematics for nine years at Skyview High School. She currently teaches Algebra I and Algebra Foundations (a support class to help fill gaps for struggling freshman), and Advanced Placement Statistics for seniors. She is privileged to have a fabulous group of collaborators who meet weekly to improve the algebra curriculum.

Kerry’s first love is watching students grow in mathematical understanding. On a daily basis, debate about which process might be the best or which tools might be used most effectively can be heard. She frequently utilizes open ended problems to bring students to a deeper understanding of problem solving. Kerry has presented mathematics workshops on activities and communication, including debate, and has published articles on a variety of mathematics education topics in Montana. Kerry is also passionate about communication and music inside the classroom and out. She coaches Skyview’s speech team and works directly with the choral program through the audition process and directing shows. This has provided many opportunities for students to realize the value of a well-rounded education, which encourages both mathematics and the arts in education at Skyview.

Kerry earned a B.A., magna cum laude, in mathematics and elementary education from Jamestown College, ND. She is National Board Certified Teacher in secondary mathematics.