



Newsletter

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Striving for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

When the spring semester was disrupted by an extraordinary pandemic, COVID-19 presented us with a “current new normal” for how we educate young people. However, last week’s senseless murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis unfortunately is an occurrence too normal for too long in our country. To Black students, alumni, coaches, and adjudicators in the WHSFA community - and their loved ones: we see you, we hear you, and we stand with you as you face the pain of centuries of oppression and racism in our country that we continue to see today.

As a society we often only pay lip-service to addressing racism, claiming approaches like “colorblindness” to avoid confronting how we truly do see color. Instead, we must embrace race to understand and appreciate different lived experiences, particularly those targeted by systemic violence. Theatre, speech, and debate activities are driven by literary material and topics of current relevance. Our students express themselves in meaningful ways to tell their truths, to share important stories, and to make us think. For those of us who have lived privileged, comfortable lives, many of these stories and topics will make us feel uncomfortable. Discomfort, however, is the only way we can grow.

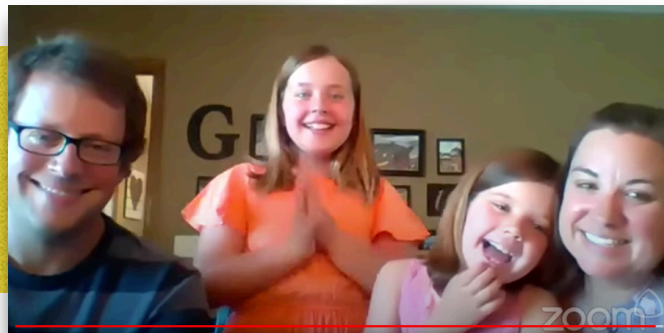
Our WHSFA community must work for equity, diversity, and inclusion. We must make our activities more accessible, supportive, and empowering for students, coaches, and adjudicators of color, and we must be accountable to ensure they have a safe space free of bigotry.

All of this starts with us listening, particularly to individuals from marginalized populations who have not been given a voice or a seat at the table.

June 1, 2020 - Statement by Adam Jacobi, Executive Director; with affirmation by Kam-Lin Roswall, Board Chair; and Pam Belden, Chair-Elect.

Resources for educators: <https://www.whsfa.org/antiracist-resources>

Coaches Honored for Leadership, Service



Ruth Phillips (left); Dave Winkler (center); Kate Greenfield and family (right)

Normally we recognize coaches with awards when our community gathers at the State Speech Festival at UW-Madison, but with the pandemic, the honorees were recognized virtually at a live ceremony now archived on the WHSFA YouTube channel. This year, there were two deserving honorees for the Lyn Luce Leadership Award.

Ruth Phillips is an art teacher and forensic speech coach at Stoughton High School, and serves as the WHSFA District 11 Chair, coordinating Speech Festivals in south-central Wisconsin. As a forensic speech coach, Phillips works tirelessly with students to cultivate constant improvement, and builds a lasting rapport for which she is respected by colleagues. As a servant-leader of her peers, she masterfully deescalates tensions and fosters

proactive planning and communication to ensure contests in her area run smoothly. Shauna Wessely, coach at Milton High School, says of Phillips: "I am impressed with her integrity and commitment to her role as District 11 Chair. I know she has made several personal sacrifices to dedicate her time, and that has not gone unnoticed nor unappreciated."

David Winkler is an English language arts teacher, yearbook advisor, and forensic speech coach at Wrightstown High School, and serves as a member of the WHSFA Speech Advisory Committee, which recommends rules and best practices for interscholastic speech contests. Winkler has coached his forensic speech team to multiple Excellence in Speech awards at the WHSFA State Speech Festival, engages in conversations to bridge the gap among various interscholastic speech associations in Wisconsin, and serves as a mentor to peers. Terri Erickson, coach at Freedom High School, says of

Winkler: "Dave welcomed me as a new coach, recognized my hesitance, and took it upon himself to offer any help he could. He invited my team to Wrightstown for Friday night pizza practices to help my students get more feedback and exposure."

Award namesake Lynda Luce was a longtime Speech coach who taught at Waupaca High School, as well as at Fox Valley Technical College, UW-Stevens Point, and UW-Oshkosh. She had been president of the Wisconsin Forensic Coaches' Association (WFCOA) and National Catholic Forensic League. She was honored with numerous awards, including the Herb Kohl Teaching Fellowship and the Wisconsin Communication Association's (WCA) Andrew T. Weaver Award for excellence in teaching speech communication. Luce's daughter, **Kate Greenfield**, a

teacher with the Madison Metropolitan School District, assists in presenting the awards in her mother's memory.

2020-21 School Year Planning

WHSFA Executive Director Adam Jacobi has been meeting regularly counterparts from across the country, as well as officials from DPI, WSMA, and WIAA, to discuss approaches and standards for the 2020-21 school year. This summer, Jacobi will present WHSFA committees and the Board with options and contingencies. Decisions will be communicated to directors/coaches in mid-August (including whether speech material can be repeated from 2020, and what we're doing for one-act plays). We do know the following for certain: things will be different, but we fully plan on students still repeating benefits participation in forensic activities offers.

Inaugural Wisconsin Heart of the Arts Award

The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), best known for setting standards for governing interscholastic high school athletics, also promotes performing arts activities, such as theatre, speech, debate, and music. Accordingly, its Heart of the Arts Award recognizes individuals or groups who exemplify the ideals of the positive heart of the arts that represent the core mission of education-based activities. The 2020 honoree from Wisconsin is **J.I. Case High School in Racine.**

Case Eagle Theater,

(@case_theater) Troupe 8259 in the International Thespian Society of the Educational Theatre Association, produces several plays a year, participates in the Wisconsin High School Forensic Association's annual one-act contest series, and conducts interactive workshops facilitated by high school students. Their performance in interscholastic one-act and Thespian festivals derives from student-written works centering on social justice issues. The group has been recognized by the Wisconsin Governor's Office, the Educational Theatre Association, as well as a host of other community and theatre groups for their Break the Hate Habit workshop, an anti-bullying program using interactive theater and team-building techniques to reshape community culture. In 2015, they won every award at the Wisconsin High School Theatre Festival, for their provocative work, "#DarkSideOfTheRainbow," a play about transgender teens and the struggles they face. Each year Case High School has participated in the aforementioned state theatre festival, they win at least one Outstanding Acting Award, and often place in the Tech Challenge (previously, "Tech Olympics").

In October 2019, Case Eagle Theater began the interscholastic one-act season in Wisconsin, performing their devised work, "Comedy Attack," about "radically different perspectives of race, relationships, and social circumstances" faced by young people at summer camp, "Campakneeslappa." Wrote faculty director Nancy Gibson on behalf of her students, "The students selected this play based on issues of undocumented people in our country. They felt that the individual stories in the script and the plot would

be a strong platform for discussion after their public performances. They also hope that the play will perform at State and offer food for thought for students in Wisconsin who do not have access to diverse populations."

When their one-act did not advance from the sectional level to State, they submitted a proposal to present a workshop at the Wisconsin High School Theatre Festival based on their play, entitled, "Improv in Action - Engaging Audiences Beyond the Fourth Wall." The workshop description was: "Step out of the audience and into an original show based on current challenges teens face, advancing improv skills within the context of a play. Use techniques to engage audiences with progressive plays and offer a dynamic way for your community to address issues.



Also engage in theater skill-building techniques that focus on group engagement and participation." The workshop was so well-received, the group spontaneously repeated it at the festival so other students would have an opportunity to engage with them on these issues.

That is Case Eagle Theater. Performance is merely a means to spread their message of hope, humanity, and harmony, exemplifying the heart this group shares with their peers from other schools. Moreover, this school is situated in one of the most economically disadvantaged school districts in the state, and uses that as a strength in their efforts to bring diverse groups together. Despite sometimes not advancing to the state level with their student-written works - often, because decidedly "old school" adjudicators cannot relate to the themes, topics, and hard-hitting nature of what students perform, these students, and director Nancy Gibson constantly hold their heads high, and value the message they're spreading over any kinds of successes and accolades (though they have earned those, too).

Speech Recap

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in extraordinary circumstances, including the first cancellation of Speech contests since World War II, when WHSFA urged schools to hold local "Victory Speech" events. After hearing outcries to offer students some type of closure and opportunity amidst the pandemic the WHSFA offered an Open Virtual Speech Festival (OVSF) at the end of April. This was done to differentiate the contest from the official Speech series, since the qualification process was abruptly stopped after only two districts held their initial contests. The OVSF offered solo categories, and had 86 schools plus 7 independent entries, for a total of 379 entries.

Additionally, since the WHSFA has been recognizing graduating seniors who earned a gold medal all four years of State participation, we couldn't fault this year's seniors for the pandemic, so for every senior who started this season participating, and who earned a medal the three years prior, we recognized them with the rebranded **Cumulative Critic's Choice Medallion**. For the next three years, we will calculate this award based on actual gold medals earned at State, and for students who began the 2020 season.

New Membership System

The WHSFA has rolled out a new membership portal to streamline the process of renewing dues, and so each school can personally check on their membership status. It will also have several communication benefits within districts, and a more reliable email notification system for advisors (coaches/directors)

1. Go to members.whsfa.org (or in the "About" menu on the website, click "Membership/Join Us").
2. Below the "Member Login" button in the center, click the link to confirm the **dues contact** for your school is correct, or contact us to change it.
3. If correct (or once corrected), return to the home page and click "Member Login."
4. Click the link for "Forgot Password?" And use the email address you received notification of this newsletter from.
5. Follow the prompts to reset your password.

These steps were implemented because we imported data into the system, but could not set individual passwords, so the system randomized passwords. We also had to arbitrarily set a "dues contact" for each school, which is why it may be incorrect for your school. Thank you for your patience. This system also now controls access to the WHSFA website proper, so if you need to access adjudicator courses, or the online store, you will click a login button on the site that will prompt you to enter the same credentials for this system. Individuals, such as adjudicators you hire or parents looking for merchandise – who are not advisors (coaches/directors) listed for your school will establish an account on the WHSFA website when enrolling in a course/checking out on an online purchase.

By June 10, we will post on our YouTube channel an instructional video for using this system.

Cumulative Critic's Choice Medallion (Gold)

Claire Brindley, Barneveld HS
 Mikenzie Leahy, Barneveld HS
 Whitney Waterbury, Barneveld HS
 Caleb Dunst, Bonduel HS
 Marty Williams, Darlington HS
 Sophya Zangri, Drummond HS
 Allie Jennings, Ellsworth HS
 Cormac Duff, Fennimore HS
 Amanda Eaton, Janesville Parker HS
 Holland Bohan, Kickapoo HS
 Aaron Murphy, Lancaster HS
 Erin Walker, Lancaster HS
 Isaiah Place, Lancaster HS
 Autumn Green, Milwaukee HS of the Arts
 Bailey Larsen, New Berlin Eisenhower HS
 Margaret Howard, Northwood HS
 Jared Peters, Pittsville HS
 Halli Martin, Plum City HS
 Mikinzie Ingli, Plum City HS
 Abi Schmeiser, Waunakee HS
 Ashlyn Anderson, Waunakee HS
 Megan Maxfield, Waunakee HS
 Emily Wesoloski, West De Pere HS