



Wisconsin Interscholastic Speech & Dramatic Arts Association

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Educators Awarded for Excellence and Leadership in Interscholastic Speech Contests

LA CROSSE, Wis. – Three Wisconsin high school educators were recognized for excellence by the Wisconsin Interscholastic Speech & Dramatic Arts Association (WISDAA).

The first honoree was recognized with the *Lyn Luce Leadership Award*:

Pamela Belden has been a dedicated district chair and member of the WISDAA Board of Control for 15+ years, shepherding the active Green Bay, Door County, and Appleton region of the state in qualifying Speech and Theatre contests, serving as a trainer/instructor for Speech adjudicators, and helping at various State Contests. Her leadership on the Board has been one of pragmatism, fairness, and vision – particularly as the organization emerges from COVID. In her own words: “Sixty years ago, a ten year old girl was encouraged by a teacher to do an oral presentation of a cutting from *Angel Unaware* by Dale Evans Rogers. In that moment, on that stage, that little girl found her voice, found her passion, found her power. She learned understanding of the human condition from the characters she portrayed on stage. She experienced the power of both tears and laughter from those same characters. She learned the might of words well organized and strongly delivered. She learned to speak both for herself and to advocate for others.” Mrs. Belden is retired from Bay Port High School, where in addition to advising contest one-act plays and speech, she recently served as coordinator of service learning.

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 (WFCA) 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, always assists in presenting the awards in her mother’s memory.

Two honorees were recognized with the *Ethel Heise New Speech Coach Award*, which recognizes excellence of coaches within their first six years of coaching:

Andrea Peterson-Longmore is a mathematics teacher at Neenah High School, where she developed and supervised the Speech and Debate teams, leading to the highest participation in 10 years, including Academic All Americans recognized by the National Speech & Debate Association (NSDA) and students who have competed and earned top honors in a variety of national contests, including the prestigious NSDA National Tournament. Yet, as a newer coach, in addition to all that she has done for

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her own students, she serves WISDAA as a district chair and member of the WISDAA Board of Control, where she stepped forward to serve as board secretary. In her first year on the Board, Ms. Peterson-Longmore volunteered to be part of the Strategic Planning Committee, the first time in more than 30 years that our organization engaged in a deep appraisal of its mission, vision, values, and priorities. She also regularly co-teaches adjudicator certification workshops. Ms. Peterson-Longmore also serves as a local NSDA district leader.

JamieLynn Teska is an English language arts teacher at Southern Door High School. In her words: “this year our goal was to have more Speech competitors than players on the football team. We met our goal with 49 students enlisted for a total of 29 entries. We have five team members competing in virtual District, but we know we have 16 entries headed to state competition for a total of 36 students.” This year (2023), Southern Door ranks in the top 5% of schools (out of 300+) participating in the State Speech Festival for its excellence. In addition to coaching, Ms. Teska obtained her masters degree, single handedly raising three children, serves as union president, and advises Southern Door’s newspaper. This is in addition to teaching dual-credit courses, contemporary literature, creative writing, and world literature.

Award namesake Ethel Heise was a longtime Speech coach from Neenah who also taught at Oshkosh Lourdes Academy where she was their first teacher to earn the esteemed Herb Kohl Teaching Fellowship in 1992, and in the same year, received the Wisconsin Communication Association’s Andrew T. Weaver Award for excellence in teaching speech communication. Heise said that she started teaching because she enjoyed her days as a student: “When I was a senior in high school, I didn’t want it to end. The next thing to do was go back and do it again.” She was always supportive of new coaches, which is why WISDAA named this award in her honor.

About the Wisconsin Interscholastic Speech & Dramatic Arts Association

Founded in 1895, the Wisconsin Interscholastic Speech & Dramatic Arts Association (WISDAA) has provided programming for middle and students in theatre, debate, and public speaking (archaically called “forensics”) activities. Each year, our nonprofit organization serves about 10,000 Wisconsin students from 375 high schools, and 150 middle schools in the longest-running high school speech contests in the nation. Our aim is to empower students to enhance their skills in presentation through interscholastic assessment. For more information, visit www.wisdaa.org.

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