



Wisconsin High School Forensic Association

PO Box 509

Ripon, WI 54971-0509

www.whsfa.org

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Teachers Awarded for Their Leadership and Excellence in Forensic Speech Communication

RIPON, Wis. – **Tina Fern-Denzer**, teacher and forensic speech coach at Viking Middle School in the Baldwin-Woodville School District, was honored Friday, April 21 with the **Lyn Luce Leadership Award** at the Wisconsin High School Forensic Association (WHSFA) State Festival at UW-Madison. Eight years ago Fern-Denzer was elected by her peers as a regional district chair for WHSFA, coordinating theatre and speech contests, as well as providing mentorship support to her colleagues. She began her career 15 years ago at Menomonie High School, where she taught for 11 years, building that school's forensic speech team into a thriving, respected program. Fern-Denzer always looks out for what's best for students, including dedicating countless hours to helping revise the WHSFA's evaluation process to be more meaningful and educational for middle and high school students.

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, was on-hand with her family to present the award to Fern-Denzer.

Jennifer Kieran, teacher and forensic speech coach at Ellsworth High School, was honored Saturday, April 22 with the **Ethel Heise New Coach Award** at the WHSFA State Festival at UW-Madison. Kieran started coaching in 2013 to revive a dying program with nine students, which she increased by about ten students each year since. Beyond recruitment, she also emphasizes quality, coaching her students to back-to-back team **Excellence in Speech Awards** in 2016 and 2017. Kieran says she coaches because she "loves watching students grow," because "public speaking is an essential skill everyone needs," and because "this is an activity that accepts all kinds of students and embraces differences and disabilities and celebrates them."

Award namesake Ethel Heise was a longtime Speech coach who taught at Oshkosh Lourdes Academy where she was their first teacher to earn the esteemed Herb Kohl Teaching Fellowship, as well as earning the WCA's Andrew T. Weaver Award for excellence in teaching speech communication. Heise said she started teaching because she enjoyed her days as a student, and always championed the encouragement of new coaches, which is why the WHSFA named this award in her honor.

About the Wisconsin High School Forensic Association

Since 1895, the Wisconsin High School Forensic Association (WHSFA) has provided programming for middle and high school students in theatre, debate, and public speaking activities. Each year, our nonprofit organization serves about 10,000 Wisconsin students from 375-400 high schools, and 150-200 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.whsfa.org.

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CONTACT

Adam J. Jacobi, Wisconsin High School Forensic Association, adam@whsfa.org, (920) 355-1895