



Wisconsin High School Forensic Association

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Adam J. Jacobi
Executive Director

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Educators Awarded for Their Leadership and Excellence in Forensic Speech Communication

MADISON, Wis. – Three Wisconsin high school educators were recognized for excellence at the recent State Speech Festival in Madison. The Wisconsin High School Forensic Association (WHSFA) held its 124th annual event on the campus of UW-Madison. More than 4,100 students from 340 high schools across the state participated April 12-13, 2019.

Patricia Luostari, teacher and forensic speech coach at Northwestern High School in Maple, Wis., was honored with the *National Federation of State High School Associations' Speech, Debate, and Theatre Educator Award*. This is in addition to being named the WHSFA's inaugural Theatre Hall of Fame – Educator Luostari has taught, coached and directed Speech and Theatre activities for more than 50 years. In addition to her educational duties, she has hosted more than 30 foreign exchange students, helped her husband and family on their dairy farm, been mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. She is a lay minister, 4-H leader, and coordinator with the county fair. Luostari said of interscholastic forensic contests, "if you worked hard, learned something, and had fun along the way, you won." Northwestern High School named the Patricia Luostari Performing Arts Center in her name for all her contributions.

Andy Wolfe, teacher and forensic speech coach at Superior High School, was honored with the *Lyn Luce Leadership Award*. Wolfe has been an English teacher, middle and high Speech coach for over a quarter-century, and student newspaper advisor for nearly two decades. Additionally, he helped coach Speech in Duluth, Minnesota, where nationally-respected coach Jill Lofald speaks highly of Wolfe's "heart for kids and our activity." He served several years as a regional *district chair* for the WHSFA, coordinating Speech and Theatre contests, and mentoring coaches in one of the areas of highest rural poverty in Wisconsin. He stepped down as district chair about six years ago to pursue his master's degree in English, and he regularly writes for local newspapers, as well as cultivates celebrated young poets at Superior High School.

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 awards.

Cole Pankratz, forensic speech coach at Memorial High School in Eau Claire, was honored with the *Ethel Heise New Coach Award*. He started coaching in 2017-18, and in the past two years, has hosted and managed three speech contests, as well as serving as a part of the WHSFA State Festival tabulation and logistics teams. While Pankratz has inspired success in his students, he emphasizes sportsmanship and inclusivity. Former coach Nick Sirek praised Pankratz for his professionalism, organization, intelligence, and compassion. Pankratz credits his own high school speech coaches for influencing his mindset and philosophy of coaching in finding a place for every student, while encouraging participation at whatever level of engagement they are able to give. Pankratz is currently a student teacher, and will graduate from UW-Eau Claire with teacher licensure.

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



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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 approximately 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.whsfa.org.

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