

Educator of the Year Nominee:

Carl Lawrence



One-Paragraph Summary

Carl Lawrence

Carl Lawrence has worked for the Sullivan Primary School for the past ten years. Working at SPS, Carl is responsible for working with the students in the behavior classroom and helping the behavior team to re-introduce students back into the regular classroom controlling their behaviors and being able to function through the day like other students. Carl is heavily involved with the wrestling program being the head youth wrestling coach for the past nine years, he was an assistant high school coach for six years, and the head highschool coach for the past four years. Carl was also a youth football coach for six years. Carl Lawrence believes in keeping a focus on working with the young people of Sullivan from primary aged to high school aged kids to make our community a better place and hopefully inspire young people to also invest into the youth of our community and give back someday. Carl Lawrence believes "if your not doing something for kids, your not doing much of anything".



Accomplishments and Contributions

1. I have held a position at the Sullivan Primary School for ten years now, I started as a one-on-one para my first year and then became a co-teaching member in the classroom setting for six years working with students on all subjects and daily tasks until I was offered the training and position in the behavior extension center as a teacher and registered behavior technician, I have worked in all settings and subjects inside the school. My duties, in summary, are to work with students who exhibit behaviors that are not acceptable inside regular classrooms with a focus on reconditioning students to get back into their classroom when behavior management is attained, I keep detailed records and logs of student behavior and progress or regress. The behavior extension room at SPS has been a major achievement for our district with the work every member does to help prevent students from being shipped to other schools or out of school altogether. We have many success stories of students who once were thought never to be able to continue in the regular classroom and become successful students once again with their peers. Students I work with daily sometimes have traumatic home lives or past traumas that they need extra support in areas where other students do not. The behavior room works with being a trauma-informed classroom and our district has put us through many professional development events to help us combat the overwhelming statistics of trauma and behaviors that we as educators are seeing more prominent each year.

This program has been successful since it was implemented at SPS and we plan to continue to keep it that way.

1. Im involved in many things inside the community, I have been a high school wrestling coach for ten years now including the head coach for the past four years, in the time I have been coaching high school wrestling we have had multiple state medalists with several team accomplishments, I have been the youth head wrestling coach for the past nine years coaching and introducing the sport of wrestling to more than two-hundred youth athletes, I have always used the youth program as a tool to help young students who do have issues with behavior in the school to learn to control themselves and develop self-discipline. I have coached over 200 athletes through the youth wrestling program with several state medalists and state champions.

I have also coached youth football for the past six years and have been actively involved with getting kids to sign up and be involved, I am also a representative for a team each year..

Most of my involvement with the community is sports-related, that is where my strengths are when working with the youth of our community.

2. Some awards I have received are

: Nominated for Educator of the Year 2015-16

: Sullivan School District staff member of the year 2020

: Missouri Wrestling Association District assistant coach of the year 2020

: Missouri Wrestling Association District Head Coach of the Year 2021

Some on Back

Educator of the Year Nominee:

Jennifer Thomure



Jennifer Thomure - 2023 Educator of the Year Nominee

Major Professional Achievements:

- Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education with an Emphasis in Middle School English Language Arts and Social Studies
- Certification in all middle school core subjects
- Certification 1-6

Accomplishments, Civic Affiliation & Leadership Positions:

- Employed at Spring Bluff R-XV School for 17 years
- Employed at St. Clair R-13 for 8 years
- Taught Grades 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and Title
- Started Garden Club, a club for building horticultural knowledge and healthy eating habits; sponsor for 4 years
- Started Chess Club, a club for building strategic thinking and improving cognitive functioning; sponsor for 3 years
- After school tutoring 15 years
- STEM Club sponsor 5 years
- Dodgeball sponsor 1 year
- Student Council sponsor 5 years
- Club 26 sponsor 3 years
- Cookies and Cocoa with Santa Community Outreach Literacy Night volunteer
- Spaghetti dinner fundraiser coordinator 2023 (fundraiser benefiting a local family)
- Grace City Church
 - Team Grace Member 4 years
 - Community-wide Baby Shower
 - Turkey donation & meal delivery
 - Sunday School/Nursery volunteer
 - Salvation Army Bell ringer

Awards:

- 2023 Spring Bluff School Teacher of the Year

When I reflect back on my youth, I think of the many people who poured into me to make me who I am today, both as an educator and as an individual. Excellent teachers such as Mrs. Flanagan, Mrs. Halmich, Mrs. Whalen, and Mr. Mason, and also excellent people, such as Marilyn and Jim Boles. Of course my family, both growing up and now, has always been extremely supportive, but my teachers and community leaders invested in me in a different way. A large portion of a child's day is at school. They helped to shape my future one day at a time: one chicken and dumpling supper, or one science project, or one book engrossing me. I decided to become a teacher because I wanted to instill the same in the next generation. My prayer is to make a positive difference in the life of every student I have the privilege to teach. I want to provide students with a top-notch education, to be successful, absolutely. But just as importantly, every day is an opportunity to impact who a child is becoming as a person. To be able to help a child believe in him or herself, to make a right decision, to persevere, to be a good friend and person: these are the everyday commitments a teacher makes. This to me is not just a responsibility, it's an honor. Building doesn't happen in a day; whether it's an individual or a community. To maintain is not enough. Each day educators have the opportunity to help build— to add something good to who that child is becoming, and help create a great community.

That responsibility is carried outside of the classroom. To serve is an integral part of my faith as a Christian. Working as a team to improve and help the community is something very important to me. The lesson of service must be taught, both to our children and to others by example. When we all do what we can, everyone benefits. Many hands make light work and help make Sullivan a great place to live.



Educator of the Year Nominee:

Haylee Strauser





Educator of the Year Nominee: Haylee Strauser

Major achievements through professional projects with which you or your organization have been involved, including dates and positions held:

Through my position as the Social-Emotional Coordinator for the Sullivan District I have the honor of collaborating with school staff to help our kiddos and families in the area of mental/behavioral health. Throughout my three and half years with Sullivan I have been involved in extremely trying cases, most of which I have been able to see through to some kind of resolution. Some of these cases include behavioral support for kiddos within the district where I am able to come in, observe and work with the kiddo, collaborate with the family and outside agencies, and develop a plan with school personnel to work toward the child's success in the educational setting. Some also include working with the support team to coordinate mental health support for the child and families and ensuring that proper steps are taken for the wellbeing of all involved. No two cases are ever the same.

Community and civic affiliations, accomplishments, and leadership positions held:

Member of Franklin County Community Resource Board- 2021-Current
Member of the Social Workers group for Franklin County- 2021-Current
Secretary for Sullivan Montessori Board- Jan. 2021-Jan. 2024

Awards, recognitions, or honors received.:

Outstanding Staff Member of the Year for the Sullivan School District for the 2022-2023 school year.
Certificate of Eagle Excellence, Board of Education Recognition-December 2023

Please describe your feelings about the importance of making Sullivan a beautiful place to live, work and visit, citing any role models and motivating factors.

Involving yourself in your community is a great way to broaden your perceptions of the world. It will help you better understand the circumstances of other community members and open your perspective to different walks of life around you. As I grow to better understand others I am able to find out what is needed to allow our community to flourish and the areas that need improvement. I have a driving force to bring more

mental/behavioral health resources to our area and there is no better way to find out what we need than by working hand in hand with our families.

One paragraph essay (225 words) highlighting professional and community achievements:

Haylee truly believes that “one of the most important things you can do on this earth is to let people know they are not alone.” Haylee Strauser has been working in the field of mental health/social emotional support for 7+ years. She started with Compass Health Network as an integrated health specialist in the Sullivan community and within our schools. Through this she provided individualized services based upon strengths, needs, and abilities identified collaboratively with kiddo and family while also providing education and skill-building in areas such as mood management skills, communication skills, behavior management, mood regulation, etc. She then joined the Sullivan School District as the Social-Emotional Coordinator where she collaborates with parents/guardians, teachers, administration, and community-based resources to overcome behavioral and mental health barriers, and advocates for appropriate services for our students and their families. Haylee is an active member of the Franklin County Community Resources Board and Social Workers group of Franklin County. She has also been heavily involved in her child's school while serving on the Sullivan Montessori School Board.

Educator of the Year Nominee:

Brandi Podner



Brandi Podner, Educator

Brandi Podner has been an educator for the Sullivan School District for nineteen years, with 16 of those years as a fourth grade teacher and the past three years as a reading intervention teacher. You will find Brandi each morning standing outside the doors of SES to greet the students. She strives to be a shining light and welcoming presence to each student that enters the building. Mrs. Podner actively seeks out opportunities to further grow as an educator and often refers to a quote by Maya Angelou that ends with ,”...when you know better, do better.” regarding all aspects of her life. Brandi is active in the community, and has supported her children’s many school activities in musical and theatrical arts and sports. Her most active involvement in the community is the volunteer work that she does with the Sullivan High School marching band program where she serves as Encore board treasurer. She fills many roles in this capacity, working with teachers and parents on fundraising, trip planning, ordering and sizing uniforms and supervising and assisting the middle school students that work with the props in the marching shows. Brandi takes pride in being from Sullivan and teaching in the district in which she was educated.



Accomplishments and Contributions

1. Major achievements through professional projects with which you or your organization have been involved, including dates and positions held.

I have been an educator for twenty-eight years. It's been an honor to teach the last nineteen years at Sullivan Elementary, where I attended elementary school. I am currently a Title reading intervention teacher for grades 3-5. Throughout my years at SES, I have been a mentor to students and teachers. I am an officer and member of the Sullivan Community Teachers' Association. I currently serve as a member of our building leadership team at Sullivan Elementary.

2. Community and civic affiliations, accomplishments, and leadership positions held.

I am the treasurer for Encore Band Boosters in which I have had the pleasure to serve as a board member for the past eight years. In this role, I have played an integral part in raising funds for this organization, providing support to students, fitting kids for uniforms, organizing trips, ordering costumes, props and equipment and serving as the volunteer coordinator for our middle school band students who work on props for the marching band.

3. Awards, recognition, or honors received.

While I have not received any awards, I am honored to be nominated for this current award as Educator of the Year. I am a graduate of Sullivan High School and I have a Masters degree in Curriculum and Instruction.

4. Please describe your feelings about the importance of making Sullivan a beautiful place to live, work and visit, citing any role models and motivating factors.

Coming back to serve in the capacity as an educator in my hometown has been one of the most rewarding experiences. I was fortunate enough to spend several years working with teachers who once taught me, and I am proud to say that I am a former student of the Sullivan School District and a Sullivan High School graduate. I believe that it is important to support community endeavors and local small businesses. As a member of Encore, I have helped bring visitors to Sullivan each year for our marching festival. In the past few years, local businesses' have tried to coordinate their events with our festival. Our parade brings many people to the downtown area of Sullivan and I am proud to show off our town and the supportive community.

Educator of the Year Nominee:

Becky Halfaker



Becky has been a teacher at Sullivan Primary for 13 years. Becky has a passion for positive relationship building with her students and their families. Early Childhood Special Education is where Becky's heart is. Loving students and watching them progress throughout the school year is such a joy. Through the multiple positions that Becky has had throughout the years, she has been able to support families, classes, and individual students to learn and grow socially, emotionally, and academically. It is Becky's mission to "instill students with compassion, perseverance, independent thinking, and love for others." Her wish is for her students to carry these qualities throughout their educational journey and into adulthood.



Becky Halfaker
Sullivan Primary School
Early Childhood Special Education Teacher

1. Major achievements through professional projects with which you or your organization have been involved, including dates and positions held:

- Member of the Community Teachers Association-2011-Present
- Member of the Welfare Committee-2 years 2022-Present
- Good Samaritan Committee-2023-Present
- Member of Missouri State Teachers Association-2011-Present
- Leader in Me Lighthouse Committee-2022-Present
- Leader in Me Culture Committee-2018-Present
- Personal Paraprofessional-2002-2004
- Parent Educator with Parents as Teachers-2004-2007
- Special Education classroom Paraprofessional-2007-2011

2. Community and civic affiliations, accomplishments, and leadership positions:

- Participant in the 5-Kden run-annually since created
- Raise awareness for the Epilepsy Foundation of America-2021-Present
- Committee member for the SHS Class of 1988 Scholarship Fund-2022-Present

3. Awards, recognition, or honors received:

- Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from Central Methodist University-2009
- Specialized certification in Early Childhood Education-2010
- Specialized certification in Early Childhood Special Education-2010

4. Please describe your feelings about the importance of making Sullivan a beautiful place to live, work and visit, citing any role models and motivating factors:

I am a lifelong resident of Sullivan and have witnessed the growth and improvements in our community through the years. When I completed my teaching degree, my goal was to obtain a job in my hometown and my local school district because of my desire to give back to my community. Growing up, I had one especially wonderful teacher-Mrs. Laura Woodland Kampschroeder (at that time a 5th grade teacher at Sullivan Middle School)-who made such a positive influence in my young life. Miss. Woodland cared deeply for each of her students and loved each of us for the individuals that we were, and would become. The love of a teacher is so impactful. It is a privilege to teach Early Childhood Special Education and form positive relationships with students and families and create a solid foundation for a future love of learning, and cherishing each student for the unique individual that they are.