



## Marian Greenblatt Education Fund

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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### **2019 Greenblatt Education Award Recipients Named** *Five Montgomery County teachers honored*

**Potomac, MD – March 4, 2019** – The Marian Greenblatt Education Fund today named five educators who will receive the 2019 Marian Greenblatt Excellence in Education Awards. Three Master Teachers were selected, representing high school, middle school, and elementary school teachers. One Master Teacher awardee will go on to become Teacher of the Year for Montgomery County, MD. Two Rising Star Teachers, with fewer than five years experience, also were recognized for excellence.

#### **Marian Greenblatt Master Teachers**

**Mr. Teak Bassett** is a social studies teacher at Clarksburg High School. He has trained new and veteran teachers, and written curriculum used throughout Montgomery County. He provides frequent and specific feedback using diagnostic, summative, and formative tests. Mr. Bassett employs equitable calling strategies to ensure each child contributes, and hosts study sessions during lunch and after school. Almost every student in the AP Comparative Government class he recently developed earned a 5 on the AP exam. Beyond the classroom, Mr. Bassett has coached speech and debate, as well as girls' lacrosse, JV football, and JV softball. He sponsors the Student Government Association and the Coyote Ambassadors Program, which, among other activities, provided Thanksgiving dinners to 60 needy families in the community.

*One of his students said, "Mr. Bassett is a thoughtful and dedicated teacher, teaching not only concepts and theories, but inspiring students to think critically and develop their own beliefs relating to topics discussed in class."*

**Ms. Madeline Hanington** is an English content specialist and teacher at Hallie Wells Middle School. Her teaching style is dynamic, challenging, and nurturing. Data demonstrate the effectiveness of her approach. Academic intervention programs she created and implemented increased MSA scores by at least five percent, and Hallie

Wells now ranks seventh overall in the county for English Language Arts. Ms. Hanington is a mentor not only to the school's English teachers, but supports and advises the rest of the staff in her school and beyond. She also serves as co-sponsor of the Junior National Honor Society, as well as the Hallie Wells Lady Scholars program, an afterschool program to support young women in achieving their highest potential.

*Principal Barbara Woodward observed, "Her lived experience: immigrant parents, poverty, academic success, coupled with her natural traits of caring and dedication, make Ms. Maddy Hanington an exceptional teacher who makes THAT difference in children's lives."*

**Ms. Maura Backenstoe** is a kindergarten teacher at Burning Tree Elementary School. Ms. Backenstoe manages a diverse classroom, including the majority of the school's kindergarteners with IEPs, physical disabilities, sensory and developmental issues, as well as non-native English speakers. During the past five years, 99 percent of her students met or exceeded the grade level reading benchmark. Ms. Backenstoe shares best practices and analyzes student data during collaborative meetings. She is a mentor to other teachers, serves as Student Government Association advisor, and coordinates the Challenger Baseball Program, which pairs high school athletes with students with disabilities. As both "Mother Hen" and school prankster, she is widely considered the glue that holds her school together.

*"I call her the 'miracle-working magical unicorn teacher' because she inspires joy and excellence in every student, of every background and need, regardless of whether they are in her class," said one parent.*

### **Marian Greenblatt Rising Star Teachers**

**Mr. Brendan Kelly** is an instrumental music teacher at Albert Einstein High School. He plans for and teaches seven completely different courses throughout the day. He has invigorated his department by asking questions and contributing new ideas. His involvement with a project-based, college style capstone course resulted in a ten percent increase in student completion rates. Mr. Kelly has increased performance opportunities for the students and has given them additional exposure to professional musicians. The marching band has grown from 8 students to 53. His jazz ensemble was invited to perform at Strathmore. He commissioned an original piece for the string orchestra. He worked with the music and arts booster club to raise thousands of dollars to repair broken instruments and provide scholarships for a trip to New York City.

*Principal James Fernandez commented, "It is apparent in his conversations with students that he treats them as young adults and holds them to very high standards. In return, the students rise to his expectations and give their best."*

**Ms. Virginia Pantella** is a STEM teacher and head of the STEM program at Gaithersburg Middle School. Curriculum she developed utilizes innovative technology

such as 3D printers and robotics to develop skills needed in real world applications and engage students in hands-on learning. She is active in writing grants and working with community partners to acquire materials for her courses. Her students built Sea Perch Robots and tested them at Carderock Naval Research Center. Ms. Pantella also sponsors the STEM Club and has led the club to numerous regional and national competitions. Her eighth-grade team won second and third place in a national sustainable transportation competition. Her all-girls team won the "Outstanding Engineer" award in the Final Frontiers Competition, and had the opportunity to meet the head of NASA Goddard Space Center.

*A colleague stated, "Ms. Pantella is consistently reflecting on the success of her students and pushing them towards excellence. She sets high expectations for her students and herself as she continues to develop engaging curriculum."*

### **About the Awards**

Master Teacher Award recipients will receive a \$2000 award, and Rising Star awardees will receive \$1000. In April, they will be honored at the Montgomery County Business Roundtable for Education's "Champions for Children Awards Celebration," where one will be named Montgomery County Teacher of the Year and could ultimately become National Teacher of the Year.

The Marian Greenblatt Education Fund is a 501c(3) non-profit organization established in 1988 to honor the memory of Dr. Marian Greenblatt, a leader in education and education policy in Montgomery County. Since its inception, the Fund has awarded more than \$167,000 to outstanding teachers and students. In addition to its annual Master Teacher and Rising Star Teacher awards, the Fund presents awards for student excellence in Social Studies and in Foreign Languages.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.greenblatteducationfund.org>

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