



# Marian Greenblatt Education Fund

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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### **2020 Greenblatt Education Award Recipients Named** *Four Montgomery County teachers honored*

**Potomac, MD – February 20, 2020** – The Marian Greenblatt Education Fund today named four educators who will receive the 2020 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. One Rising-Star Teacher, with fewer than five years' experience, also was recognized for excellence.

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

**Mr. Rodney Van Tassell** is a Social Studies Resource Teacher at Winston Churchill High School. During his decade teaching AP US History, the class transformed from one that was taken by 25 high-performing seniors to one that includes 250 students, mostly in the 9th grade. At the same time, scores on the AP exam averaged a 3.94, well above the global mean of 2.71. Mr. Van Tassell brought a focus on student-centered learning to his department. His innovative approaches include assigning students to write a breakup song between the U.S. and Great Britain, transforming his classroom into a courtroom for students to put Thomas Jefferson on trial, and assigning students to create a New Deal Road Trip. His “speed dating” activity for 19th-century American reformers increased scores on assessments and has been adopted in various forms by other advanced classes.

*One of his students remarked, “A ‘good’ teacher is someone who will teach you enough to pass the class, but a ‘great’ teacher, like Mr. Van Tassell, will make you love his subject and want to come to class everyday.”*

**Ms. Inge Chichester** is the content specialist for the World Studies Department at Sligo Middle School. She holds students and her fellow teachers to the highest of expectations. Through her work with content literacy and evidence-based writing, as well as her partnership with the English Department, Ms. Chichester helped to raise 7<sup>th</sup> grade literacy scores and reduce the number of students with academic ineligibility to

levels well below county averages. She pushes her fellow teachers to plan collaboratively, reflect on lessons, and go beyond school or district requirements. Her expertise is solicited by her peers throughout the county, and she has collaborated on the development of curricula. Her classroom is a safe haven for students. Ms. Chichester is perhaps best renowned for greeting incoming students with her bullhorn each morning, and for reminding students, "I love you to life."

*Principal Shauna-Kay Jorandby observed, "Ms. Chichester is the definition of a warm demander. She expects greatness from her students. She supports them as she holds them accountable. She has a special magic in making them see and believe in their own growth and capabilities."*

**Ms. Annie Moore** is a kindergarten teacher at Farmland Elementary School. A National Board Certified teacher, Ms. Moore provides rigorous instruction that makes connections to students' everyday lives. She has taken students from the 39<sup>th</sup> percentile for kindergarten benchmarks to the 70<sup>th</sup> percentile. She reviews data to ensure all students excel. For example, she developed instruction surrounding phonological awareness and word recognition based on results from the MAP-RF assessment. This year, all 25 of her students met the grade level standard for letter recognition and phonics. She is a valued mentor to other teachers and communicates regularly with parents. Her annual Author's Tea reception gives her students an opportunity to showcase their growth as writers.

*Farmland PTA President Dorigen Hoffman, the parent of two children who had Ms. Moore in kindergarten, commented, "She is able to expertly foster a positive and joyful, yet calm and structured classroom, that encouraged an early reader to push herself and a slower reader to gain confidence."*

### **Marian Greenblatt Rising Star Teacher**

**Ms. Susan Joanna Martinez-Mack** is a science teacher at Julius West Middle School. She is deeply passionate about education and the success of her students. Ms. Martinez-Mack advocates for new technologies and initiatives like higher order questioning, active classroom, and student discourse. Beyond the classroom, she sponsors the Green Team Science Club, which engages students in STEM based activities and raises awareness among students and staff about energy conservation and ecology. She also coaches and mentors the cross-country team and works with a club called "La Familia" for Hispanic students. Ms. Martinez-Mack helped write a grant proposal for a STEM-focused energy program and is working to get Julius West certified as a green school.

*A parent of one of her students said, "Ms. Martinez-Mack treats each of her students with the amount of respect that they deserve, even through their worst moments. She recognizes when students accomplish something amazing in her class, she makes learning fun, and she rewards students for being academically great."*

## **About the Awards**

Master Teacher Award recipients receive a \$2000 award, and Rising Star awardees receive \$1000. In April, they will be honored at the Montgomery County “Champions for Children Awards Celebration,” where one Master Teacher will be named Montgomery County Teacher of the Year and could ultimately become National Teacher of the Year. One Marian Greenblatt Fund awardee, Kim Oliver, was named Teacher of the Year in 2006.

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 \$178,000 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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