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January

**School District of Palm Beach County Announces
Principal, Assistant Principal, Teacher, and School-Related Employee of
the Year**

WEST PALM BEACH – The School District of Palm Beach County, along with the Education Foundation of Palm Beach County, honors the 2022 Principal, Assistant Principal, Teacher, and School-Related Employee of the Year during the inaugural ‘Celebrate the Great’ awards ceremony. This year’s winners are:

- Principal of the Year – Robera Walker Thompson, Belle Glade Elementary School
- Assistant Principal of the Year – Amber Saunders, Jupiter Community High School
- Teacher of the Year – Annabel Wagner, Greenacres Elementary School
- School-Related Employee of the Year – Connie Leonardi, New Horizons Elementary School

Winners were announced during an outdoor awards ceremony at the Cox Science Center and Aquarium. The winners will represent the District as they go on to compete at the State level as part of the Florida Department of Education recognition programs.



(Left to right: Teacher of the Year - Annabel Wagner, Principal of the Year - Robera Walker Thompson, Assistant Principal of the Year - Amber Saunders, School-Related Employee of the Year - Connie Leonardi.)

“Dedicated. Hardworking. Enthusiastic. Going above and beyond. These are the kinds of traits and characteristics that not only make our employees special, but it’s what keeps this District running, through ups and downs and all the challenges we may face,” stated Superintendent Mike Burke.

“No matter how technologically advanced we become, or how many new theories of pedagogy are created and become popular, the reality of education will always come down to one person; the educator,” Education Foundation of Palm Beach County President and CEO James Gavrilos said. “Palm Beach County is home to the finest, most dedicated and most impactful educators anywhere. They are worthy to be celebrated, and deserving to be honored. Congratulations to each of our winners!”

Principal of the Year – Robera Walker Thompson



Robera Walker Thompson established a strong vision to achieve better student outcomes in the classroom for all Belle Glade Elementary children, as well as increase their capacity for social-emotional learning. She is considered a phenomenal leader and mentor, as well as an inspiration to those around her. The

school's positive climate of developing the hearts and minds of children can be attributed to Walker Thompson's leadership.

"I have only two biological kids, but I have 600 Belle Glade Elementary students that I wake up and make it happen for every day because that is exactly what they deserve," Robera Walker Thompson said.

Assistant Principal of the Year – Amber Saunders



Amber Saunders is highly respected by students, parents, and the staff at Jupiter Community High School, thanks to her unique ability to lead with expertise and empathy. Saunders has been integral to the development of new programs, including the establishment of the school's Cambridge International Diploma Program. She believes passionately in social progress and working for the common good.

"My administrative team at Jupiter High is incredible," said Amber Saunders. "They make work fun every day and I love my job."

Teacher of the Year – Annabel Wagner



Annabel Wagner creates lessons at Greenacres Elementary School that are targeted, engaging, and student-centered. Wagner has taught in the District for more than 15 years, with 32 years of overall teaching experience, longevity fueled by her passion for bilingualism and biliteracy. The leadership she demonstrates has touched countless lives in meaningful ways.

“I promise to continue on this journey, being the best teacher, making a difference in our students’ lives, and being a leader and mentor to new teachers,” Annabel Wagner said.

School-Related Employee of the Year – Connie Leonardi



Connie Leonardi has worked at New Horizons Elementary in varying roles for more than 20 years. Throughout her tenure at the school, she developed a reputation as a dedicated employee who routinely goes above and beyond in her duties. Her principal describes her as positive, organized, and energetic, referring to her as an irreplaceable part of the school staff.

“I came to New Horizons 22 years ago when I enrolled my twin boys in kindergarten,” said Connie Leonardi. “I immediately fell in love with the school. It changed my life.”

The 2022 Celebrate the Great is presented through a collaboration between the School District of Palm Beach County and the Education Foundation of Palm Beach County to recognize top educational leaders, with the support of presenting sponsors Comcast and UnitedHealthcare, along with other event sponsors and community partners: Airport Hilton, The Breakers, C. Kenneth & Laura Baxter Foundation, Gold Coast Federal Credit Union, Keiser University, Lion Country Safari, Nova Southeastern University (NSU), Office Depot, PNC Bank, T-Mobile, Tickets at Work, Red Apple Supplies, and ViVa Finance.

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About the School District of Palm Beach County

The School District of Palm Beach County is the 10th largest in the nation and the fifth largest in the state of Florida serving more than 197,000 students (this number includes students that attend non-District operated Charter Schools) who speak 146 languages and dialects. As the largest employer in Palm Beach County, the School District has more than 22,000 employees, including more than 13,000 teachers. To learn more about the School District, visit www.palmbeachschools.org.