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For immediate release

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Detroit Lakes Educator Named Recipient of \$15,000 Award for Excellence

Kelli Hanninen, a teacher from Rossman Elementary School in the Detroit Lakes Public Schools was surprised April 10 with the news that she is a recipient of a 2014 WEM Outstanding Educator Award for Ethics in Education, an honor that is accompanied by a \$15,000 award.

Hanninen is one of six educators being honored by the WEM Foundation and Synergy & Leadership Exchange for outstanding accomplishments and contributions to student learning. She is one of two recipients of the WEM Foundation's statewide Ethics in Education Award, which recognizes educators who embody ethical behavior and promote ethical development for students through classroom or school activities, policies or curriculum.

Hanninen, who has been teaching for 20 years, currently teaches fifth grade at Rossman Elementary School. In addition, Hanninen provides leadership for the school's character education program.

"Kelli's teaching reflects the best practices that are required for students to have a quality education experience. She makes appropriate teaching decisions daily that meet the needs of all students and effectively evaluates curriculum objectives to make them meaningful for each individual child," said Principal Sanford Nelson.

To promote ethical conduct within her classroom, Hanninen incorporates the Six Pillars of Character which include, trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. Her students' behavior is guided by a matrix that describes each pillar's expectations appropriate to their fifth grade level. Every morning she engages her students in self-reflection geared toward continually developing those important life skills.

"Mrs. Hanninen is not only a great teacher but also a great role model for children. She is committed to her students and not just teaching them the basics expected in fifth grade but she also teaches them life skills. She teaches them respect, responsibility and how to be model citizens in our community," shared a parent of a former student.

Outside of Rossman Elementary, Hanninen facilitates continuing education courses for teachers throughout the United States. She teaches a wide variety of courses including: anti-bullying, coping with conflict, differentiated instruction, positive behavioral management and more.

In addition to the *Ethics in Education Award*, two honorees are recognized with the *Academic Challenge Coach Award* (classroom teachers who are exemplary coaches of student teams that participate and compete in academic challenges endorsed by the Minnesota Academic League Council) and two with the *Teacher Achievement Award* (exemplary teachers who support, inspire and assist students to attain greater learning as evidenced by student achievement).

Educators are first nominated for the WEM Outstanding Educator Awards Program by students, parents, colleagues or community members. Those who accept the nomination provide additional information for consideration by Synergy & Leadership Exchange and a blue ribbon selection panel, which reviews and ranks the nominees.

In addition to the six statewide honorees, additional educators have been selected as regional honorees for 2015. These names will be announced in May.

Synergy & Leadership Exchange (Synergy) is a non-profit organization dedicated to fostering collaboration to advance the development of ethical citizens, providing educational resources, and celebrating achievement and best practices in Minnesota schools, businesses and communities.

For more information on the WEM Outstanding Educator Awards Program and Synergy & Leadership Exchange, visit: www.synergyexchange.org.