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For immediate release

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St. James Administrator Named Recipient of \$15,000 Award for Excellence

Karla Beck, a principal from St. James Middle & High School in the St. James Public Schools was surprised April 12 with the news that she is a recipient of a 2017 WEM Outstanding Educator Award for Ethics in Education, an honor that is accompanied by a \$15,000 award.

Beck 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.

"Mrs. Beck believes educators need to learn, grow and change to best meet students' needs," a colleague shared. "Her passion is evident when she shares her learning with others. She encourages her staff to move away from traditional teaching strategies and think outside the box to work with innovative approaches that motivate and engage students."

Beck has been in the education field for 17 years. Beck started her administrative assignment in the St. James Public Schools five years ago at Northside Elementary School. The site had been identified as a priority school and much work needed to be done to turn things around. The staff at Northside worked with Mrs. Beck in a collaborative fashion to increase scores and decrease achievement gaps. The building went from priority school status to continuous improvement to a celebration site all in three short years.

"Mrs. Beck is driven to succeed and provide quality results," said a parent. "With all the challenges and changes she has encountered since working in administration, she never fails to rise to the challenge and bring everyone along with her. She is consistently recognized for her strong sense of urgency, initiative, and competitive drive to achieve goals, and her persuasive skills and aptitude for enthusiastically motivating others."

A new initiative Beck was part of creating was a partnership with Mayo Health Systems and St. James High School to offer Health Career courses. Students get hands-on experiences in fourteen rotations including nursing, therapy, administration and emergency room care through this onsite course. In addition to this, a class was started in which students learn the required curriculum for becoming a CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant) while partnering with the local Good Samaritan Long-Term Care Facility for internship and practicum hours.

In addition to the *Ethics in Education Award*, two statewide honorees are recognized with the *Academic Challenge Coach Award* (exemplary coaches of student teams that participate and compete in academic challenges approved 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 2017. 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.