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For immediate release

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Thief River Falls Educator Named Recipient of \$15,000 Award for Excellence

Kurt Reynolds, a teacher from Lincoln High School in the Thief River Falls Public Schools, was surprised April 11 with the news that he is a recipient of a 2017 WEM Outstanding Educator Award for Teacher Achievement, an honor that is accompanied by a \$15,000 award.

Reynolds is one of six educators being honored by the WEM Foundation and Synergy & Leadership Exchange for outstanding accomplishments and contributions to student learning. He is one of two recipients of the Teacher Achievement Award, which recognizes exemplary teachers who support, inspire and assist students to attain greater learning as evidenced by student achievement.

Reynolds has been teaching for 19 years and currently teaches high school English and college composition at Lincoln High School. In addition, he is also teaching an introductory education course at the University of North Dakota. Reynolds does not want to simply prepare students for college and a career. Instead, he wants to help develop remarkable, life-long learners who have developed skills that allow them to adapt to any changes the future may hold.

“He teaches students to find their niche, which is so important,” shared a student. “Many students graduate high school without a clue what to do next. Mr. Reynolds helped me, as well as countless others, feel ready for that next step. His teaching style is legendary, engaging and incredible.”

One of Reynolds missions in his classroom is to catch his students doing something right every day. He captures these moments and shares it with their parents and the community. He wants to show the parents how amazing their kids are.

“Mr. Reynolds is able to accomplish amazing things because of the strong relationships he builds with each student,” said Principal Shane Zutz. “His emphasis on creating a classroom culture where students trust him and are not afraid to take risks in their learning has helped create the best classroom learning environment for all students that I have ever seen.”

In addition to the *Teacher Achievement Award*, two honorees are recognized with the *Ethics in Education Award* (exemplary educators who embody ethical behavior and promote ethical development for students through classroom or school activities, policies or curriculum) and two with the *Academic Challenge Coach Award* (classroom teachers who are exemplary coaches of student teams that participate and compete in academic challenges approved by the Minnesota Academic League Council).

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.

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