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**TEXAS HIGH TEACHER RECOGNIZED AS
STATE'S TOP JOURNALISM EDUCATOR**



Texarkana, TX – Rebecca Potter, newspaper and yearbook adviser at Texas High School, was named the recipient of the Max R. Haddick Teacher of the Year Award by the Interscholastic League Press Conference (ILPC). The award was presented during the concluding ceremonies of the 91st annual ILPC state convention, held May 5-6 at The University of Texas at Austin. The Interscholastic League Press Conference, an affiliate of the University Interscholastic League, is one of the nation's largest state high school associations of student newspapers and yearbooks.

Potter has advised publications for more than two decades. As a teacher she has been honored in several areas. She was named an Edith Fox King award winner by ILPC for leadership in scholastic journalism in Texas, honored as Teacher of the Year at Texas High School and received the Texas Association of Journalism Educators Texas Trailblazer Award. And on top of that, her students have won nearly every state and national journalism award — from ILPC Star Awards to NSPA Pacemakers.

“Rebecca doesn’t like the limelight,” said Jeanne Acton, ILPC Director. “Instead, she stands in the background, directing and orchestrating one of the best — if not THE best — yearbook and newspaper in the State and nation. Hands down – her publications have the best coverage and best writing I’ve ever seen from high school students.”

Charla Harris, the newspaper and yearbook adviser from Pleasant Grove High School, nominated Potter for the award.

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“Rebecca helps her students develop into independent, confident, critical thinkers who are ready to change the world for the better,” Harris said. “She gives her students the confidence and enthusiasm for journalism and facilitates strong, gripping writing and innovative design. She is not only my best friend, she’s also one of the best journalism teachers in the country.”

Clint Smith, her partner teacher, said Potter believes that it is “our duty to train the future of journalism to be ethical, fearless and compassionate.”

Potter was shocked to receive the award. She shared that as she was listening during the presentation, she was trying to see if she could guess the winner. As the presentation continued, she realized it was her they were talking about.

“My career has been molded by the advisers I’ve had the privilege to know. Connie Penny, who mentored me during my student teaching, was the first example of what an adviser should be like. Awards covered her walls, and I thought how I wanted to be like her. Lori Oglesbee-Petter spoke at the first yearbook workshop I attended. She sparked a desire to do something magical with the group of kids I had met just the day before. Although that first book was hardly magical, I knew the direction I wanted to go.”

“Then along came Charla Harris. She NEVER lets up. My crosstown rival is also my biggest supporter. When I’m tired or frustrated, she’s there with encouragement and that little competitive nudge to keep me going. My co-teacher, Clint Smith, never backs down from a challenge. When the kids approach him with some crazy idea, he always says, ‘I’ll make it happen.’”

“There are so many of my fellow advisers I admire, among them the entire Texas Association of Journalism Educators board. During the convention, I saw multiple examples of amazing student work. I said to my kids, ‘We can do better.’ The point is that we make each other better, and to my fellow advisers, thank you for making me better.”

Her nomination packet contained multiple letters from former students who sang Potter’s praise. One said, “Potter (what we called her) told me once that through writing, I could change the world,” she said. “I grew up with a love for words and stories, but it was Potter who turned me into a writer.”

During the awards ceremony, Acton said Potter teaches her students to report with “depth and maturity.” Something she doesn’t see in every high school newspaper or yearbook.

“And year after year, her students walk away from this convention with multiple Gold Stars and many, many individual medals,” Acton said. “But you won’t see this adviser bragging about the medals or listing them in her bio. She doesn’t want the journalism world talking about her. But today, we are going to talk about her.”

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