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## McFarland educator named Wisconsin Middle School Teacher of the Year

*Jill Runde to receive \$3,000 from Herb Kohl Educational Foundation*

MADISON — In a surprise ceremony at her school, Jill Runde, a middle school guidance counselor at Indian Mound Middle School in McFarland, was named Wisconsin’s 2018 Middle School Teacher of the Year.

State Superintendent Tony Evers made the announcement during an all-school assembly. As part of the Teacher of the Year honor, Runde will receive \$3,000 from the Herb Kohl Educational Foundation.

“Teaching is a career for optimists. People who see the potential in each student and meet challenges with innovative solutions that improve the lives and education of our kids,” Evers said. “A Teacher of the Year recipient inspires the young people in their school and their colleagues in the school and community. It is an honor to recognize educators who do so much for Wisconsin’s public schools.”

“The Teacher of the Year program highlights the many contributions educators make to our children, schools, and communities,” said Herb Kohl, philanthropist and businessman, who co-sponsors the Wisconsin Teacher of the Year program through his educational foundation. “Our teachers make extraordinary efforts to help all children achieve.”

“Learning is truly a three-legged stool: the emotional and social legs are equally as important as the intellectual development of our youth,” said Runde of her educational philosophy. She notes that society’s unsolved problems such as — poverty, homelessness, and untreated mental illness — come to school in the form of trauma that inhibits the potential of children in the classroom. Runde works to unpack the trauma and give children coping strategies to succeed.

While at McFarland High School, Runde founded the “Tolerance and Diversity Awareness” improvisational troupe, which had participating junior and senior students performing skits on topics such as bullying, stereotyping, puberty, teen suicide, and drugs and alcohol. At the middle school where she now works, Runde has 55 students who volunteer to be in the “Ambassador” student liaison group for Positive Behavior Interventions and Support. The students make videos, perform skits for assemblies, create bulletin boards, and

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facilitate “Mix It Up” day lunches to support the schoolwide behavior plan. She notes that schools have been at the forefront of education around differences and inclusiveness, which have had a positive effect on students, helping them feel more comfortable, less bullied, and better able to achieve at higher levels.

Runde hopes to improve access to mental health services through a partnership with local mental health professionals. “If we were able to have a mental health representative at our school, the barriers of getting counseling for families would be minimized,” she said. “School is a comfortable, familiar place that is less intimidating to families.”

An e-mail from the parent of a former student, thanked Runde for her work. A former student wrote that “it is clear that she isn’t simply performing a job, she is pursuing a passion and her purpose in life by helping others.” The former student credits Runde’s “approachability, accepting nature, and uncanny ability to see when a student is in need of help” as a distinct turning point in his life.

With a commitment to youth that extends beyond school into the community, Runde serves on the board of directors of the McFarland Youth Center and is a member of the Optimist Club, which coordinates many youth activities in the community. She volunteers at her church, with the “Shared Table” community supper program, and with the “Bowls for Hunger” fundraiser for the local food pantry. In supporting Runde’s nomination, Shawn Miller, president of the McFarland Youth Center, remarked that “the McFarland community is a much better place for children thanks to someone as dedicated as Jill.”

Runde began her school counseling career at McFarland High School in 2002. She moved to her current position in at Indian Mound Middle School in 2007. She is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater with a degree in business administration-marketing. She earned her master’s degree in counseling education from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville.

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