

**PRESS RELEASE**

**May 6, 2019**

**Submitted by Lesia Goodman, HR Director, Ashe County Schools**

Each May our school system has the opportunity to spotlight dedicated personnel who have gone above and beyond in their positions during the school year. Ashe County Schools would like to recognize four employees that have been nominated by either their peers, community members, and/or administration and selected and named in their recognition category for the 2019-2020 school year.

**ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE ASHE COUNTY SCHOOLS ODDIE COX TEACHER OF THE YEAR**

The 2019-2020 Ashe County School's Teacher of the Year was named Monday, May 6, 2019. Mrs. Callie Lewis, art teacher at Westwood Elementary, was surprised by Mrs. Phyllis Yates, Superintendent of Ashe County Schools, along with other administrators from Ashe County School's Central Support Staff, and colleagues at Westwood, as they visited her art classroom and made the announcement.

Mrs. Lewis was selected by a team of school system personnel, a middle school student, and community leaders by an evaluation of a written portfolio and face-to-face interview. During her interview Mrs. Lewis stated, *"I chose a career in art education because I wanted a job that I loved."* Mrs. Lewis doesn't start with the art lesson, she begins with hugs, high fives, tying shoes, telling cheesy jokes and building relationships with all her art students. *"Every day is an awarding day in the art classroom. I work with 552 students every week and they all bring their talents to share. I am here for all of them. I am not at school to impress my administration, to shine above the others or to earn the highest pay. I chose this career in hopes of providing an outlet for students to recharge, a source of renewed energy and joy."* Mrs. Lewis is a team player with a positive attitude. Mrs. Jennifer Holden, principal of Westwood states, *"Mrs. Callie works to plan amazing art lessons that will excite students. She recently helped to organize our Art/Literacy Parent Night and made the night for parents and children educational and fun. She is kind and professional to others and I am glad she is with us at Westwood."*

*"Mrs. Callie is a great art teacher, and an asset to our team, and good to work with. She is a great inspiration for our teachers and students,"* states Kevin Miller, physical education teacher at Westwood.

She collaborates with all the art teachers in the district to create an exciting art education for the students in her classroom. She is involved in the community, working closely with the Ashe Arts Council to promote arts in our county. *"Callie Lewis is an inspiration to all of her students. She encourages them to be themselves, experiment without fear, and generally embrace joy in their lives. She enriches every person she meets on a daily basis,"* stated Jill Gambill, art teacher at Ashe County Middle School. Many of the students shared thoughts about Mrs. Lewis saying she is modern, awesome, does cool projects, creative and plays music every morning. Laura Bowers, media specialist at Westwood and Callie's mentor for three years shares, *"Callie has*

*impressed me from the first day. She is a natural teacher and I am so glad she chose Westwood to begin her career.”*

Mrs. Lewis grew up in Ashe County. She attended elementary school at Mountain View and attended Ashe Middle and graduated from Ashe High. She began her career after receiving her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at Appalachian State University in 2015. Mrs. Lewis is married to Dalton Lewis who also teaches in our system. She and her husband are the youth leaders at Cornerstone Missionary Baptist in Deep Gap.

For more than 50 years our nation has honored teachers with the National Teacher of the Year Program. The National Teacher of the Year Program, sponsored by the Voya Financial, Inc., is a project of the Council of Chief State School Officers. Since 1970, North Carolina has participated in this program recognizing outstanding teachers. The Teacher of the Year program provides an opportunity to honor and recognize exemplary teachers in North Carolina and to call attention to the importance of the teaching profession. Mrs. Lewis will compete with teachers in the Northwest Region for the title of Region 7 Teacher of the Year in the fall.

The Ashe County Schools Teacher of the Year is chosen from among each school's Teacher of the Year. For the 2019-2020 school year, the Ashe County High School Teacher of the Year is Amber Dillingham, art teacher. The Teacher of the Year for Ashe County Middle School is Summer Davis, math teacher. Teachers of the Year for Blue Ridge Elementary School is Charles Johnson and Mountain View Elementary is Cynthia Harless, teacher of Exceptional Children.

## **ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE ASHE COUNTY SCHOOLS SUPPORT STAFF/SUPERVISORY EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR**

When your administrator calls from her office that she needs you, Christina Pennington always answers the call ready to serve. Except for this morning when she came, Mrs. Pennington was surprised by a hallway of central services staff, school staff, administrators and Mrs. Phyllis Yates, Superintendent of Ashe County Schools, announcing her selection as district-wide Support Staff/Supervisory Employee of the Year for 2019-2020.

Mrs. Pennington's main roles at Ashe High are Curriculum Coordinator and Graduation Coach. As she alluded to in her portfolio, both of these positions have a great impact on the education of children in Ashe County Schools. Every day she makes herself available to teachers, students and administration to increase student success at Ashe High. As a coach, she collaborates with teachers to create the best instructional lessons while assisting in finding relevant resources to aid in improved learning. As the graduation coach, she is intentionally working with students to provide needs that will enable them to be more successful in the classroom and ultimately ensure graduation. Amanda Hipp, principal of Ashe High states, *“Christina is an incredibly hard worker. She cares about the students and works hard to help them create a plan for graduation and what they will do next. She is excited to bring new learning opportunities to our students and teachers.”* A student stated, *“Mrs. Pennington has helped me through a lot of*

*problems. She is outgoing and very understanding. There is really nothing she can't help you with. She has made my high school career better."*

Mrs. Pennington began her career with Ashe County Schools in 1999. She was assigned to the Ashe Middle to teach 8<sup>th</sup> grade math. She was transferred to the high school in 2006 and taught math until 2017 when she accepted her current position. Mrs. Pennington has served in the offices of State Secretary and Western Region Vice President of High School for North Carolina Council of Teacher of Mathematics. She was a finalist for the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. She has spent multiple summers providing math professional development across the state of North Carolina. Mrs. Pennington is invested in the lives of our students and desires from them to succeed. As she writes in her portfolio, *"I began the process of honoring our future graduates by painting **Oh, the Places You'll Go** on a hallway wall and adding pictures of seniors celebrating career and college plans for graduation. My intention is to help younger students to identify with some of these seniors to start thinking about where they plan to be after high school."* By working closely with the ASU Gear Up team, she has reworked the computer lab at the high school to become a STEAM (science, technology, engineering, and math) Lab for students to utilize next school year. Mrs. Pennington reflects on the individual child. She believes that every kid is one caring adult away from being a success story. That is why she is so passionate about the work she is doing every single day. Brian Hampton, a colleague shared, *"Mrs. Pennington is the happiest person in our school system and it is due to her love and dedication to all our students."*

This is a fairly new recognition for our school system. Ashe County Schools wants to promote the profession of support service and supervisory personnel by recognizing, rewarding, and supporting the district's outstanding employees that go above and beyond in their area of expertise. This recognition honors employees who demonstrate excellence in work performance, leadership and commitment to our school system and students.

Much like the Teacher of the Year, the nominees are selected by each school's teachers. The nominees submitted a portfolio and completed a face-to-face interview. Nominees for the Support Staff/Supervisory Employee of the Year for the 2019-2020 school year were:

Christina Pennington, Curriculum Coordinator/Graduation Coach at Ashe County High School; Gordon Prince, Assistant Principal at Ashe County Middle; Amanda Bloomer, School Counselor, at Westwood Elementary, School Nurse at Mountain View Elementary and Tammy Craine, School Nurse at Blue Ridge Elementary.

**ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE ASHE COUNTY SCHOOLS BEGINNING TEACHER “ROOKIE OF THE YEAR” sponsored by the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching (NCCAT) and North Carolina New Teacher Support Program**

Recently across the State of North Carolina, many of our systems are becoming involved with the recognition of “Rookie of the Year” through NCCAT for beginning teachers. This award is for beginning teachers in their 1<sup>st</sup> year of teaching. Ashe County Schools is excited to name Jordan Nemeth, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher at Mountain View, as the ACS “Rookie of the Year” 2019-2020.

*“Mountain View was very fortunate to be able to hire Mrs. Nemeth. She always puts the needs of her students first and has an engaging personality and teaching style,”* stated David Blackburn, principal at Mountain View. Jordan was given a class of 20 third graders. Lesia Goodman, Director of HR states, *“As a beginning teacher, you want everything perfect in your room for that first day of school. When I visited Jordan’s classroom before the beginning of school, I saw that Jordan had established an inviting learning space for students to feel safe and enjoy learning.”* Jordan states, *“As a new teacher, if I had only known that the plans I had prepared for the day may not go the way I expected, it would have been easier to roll with the punches.”* Jordan emphasized that beginning teachers must collaborate with everyone. This enables a new teacher to have the expertise of many professionals to enhance learning in the classroom. Lori Hensley, another 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher at Mountain View and Jordan’s mentor states, *“Jordan does an outstanding job of differentiating instruction for her students. She is a team player who goes the extra mile to ensure student success.”*

The Ashe County Board of Education supports all of our beginning teachers by providing funding for mentors and a coach through the North Carolina New Teacher Support Program, Dr. Betsy Rosenbalm. Dr. Rosenbalm states, *“It has been a great honor to watch Jordan Nemeth grow as a teacher this school year. From her first day of teaching, she has worked tirelessly to establish a differentiated learning environment that meets the needs of all of her students through engaging, enriching, and prescriptive lessons. Her desire to see every child succeed drives her to be a strong and caring advocate for kids!”*

*Jordan states, “This year has been one of the hardest but yet rewarding.” “I look forward to next year as I welcome new students to third grade!”*

The criteria for selection of ACS Rookie of the Year is that the beginning teacher must display a positive, professional attitude, participate in school activities, complete all required beginning teacher activities, communicate well with all stakeholders, demonstrate potential for leadership, and engage in reflective practice.

**CONGRATULATIONS!!**

## Press Release

2019-20 Classified Employee of the Year  
Ashe County Schools  
Marcia Elledge, Assistant Director of HR

### **We are excited to announce the recipient of the Classified Employee of the Year for 2019-20 Mrs. Robin Scott, Teacher Assistant at Blue Ridge Elementary!**

Mrs. Phyllis Yates, Superintendent, along with other administrators from Ashe County Schools Central Support Services and Blue Ridge Elementary, surprised Mrs. Scott with the announcement today.

Robin Scott began her career with Ashe County Schools in January 2002. Mrs. Scott is dedicated to her job. She takes pride in her work and wants the best for the students.

One individual who nominated Mrs. Scott put it this way, *“Mrs. Scott demonstrates compassion for all students and adults at Blue Ridge Elementary. Her down to earth logical approach has allowed her to relate to students and faculty on a close interpersonal level. She most often works in a one-on-one environment to provide quality instruction that has elevated these students learning potential and set the foundation for their future growth.”*

Mrs. Scott has accepted a leadership role at Blue Ridge and is very willing to fill in where needs arise. Her willingness to go beyond in any area has created an atmosphere of cooperation and trust throughout the school.

The nomination period was March 1, 2019 through March 31, 2019. All nominations were collected from community members, co-workers and/or administration and collected by the Human Resources Office. Each nominee was screened by Central Support Services staff to determine eligibility. Nominees were then organized by site/school. A list of nominees was sent to the respective site/school. Employees had an opportunity to vote by ballot for the finalist from their school/site.

The top finalist from each school/site had the opportunity to complete a questionnaire and participate in a county-wide interview to determine the Ashe County Schools Classified Employee of the Year.

### **The following is a list of employees who were nominated from each school or site:**

Tim Walton – Ashe County High School  
Beth Hodges – Ashe Early College  
Carrie Blevins – Ashe Early Learning Center  
Christine Richardson – Ashe County Middle School  
Robin Scott – Blue Ridge Elementary  
Crystal Crouse – Mountain View Elementary  
David Higgins – Westwood Elementary

