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NORTH COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL GERMAN TEACHER KATRINA GRIFFIN NAMED AACPS TEACHER OF THE YEAR; STEPHANIE LOTZE OF ST. MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL WINS INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS HONOR

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What an interesting journey it has been for Katrina Griffin.

After wanting to quit teaching on her third day in 2001 – before her first students even arrived – and subsequently being talked out of it, Griffin has gone on to make quite an impact and receive numerous accolades in her 15 years at North County High School. Tonight, the German teacher's influence on her students was recognized with another honor: 2015-16 Anne Arundel County Public Schools Teacher of the Year.

The surprise announcement came at the end of the 30th annual Excellence in Education Awards, presented in partnership by Anne Arundel County Public Schools and the Annapolis & Anne Arundel County Chamber of Commerce. Stephanie Lotze, a science teacher at St. Mary's High School, was named Independent Schools Teacher of the Year.

"I accept this on behalf of everyone who works at North County High School because this is for you," Griffin, who also is the chair of North County's World & Classical Languages Department, told the crowd of nearly 500 gathered at the BWI Marriott for the celebration. "This is proof that good things happen in our challenging schools."

Griffin is the first teacher at a school in the North County cluster to win the award since its inception in 1987. She will represent Anne Arundel County in the Maryland State Teacher of the Year competition next fall.



Forty-two educators from public and private schools were recognized during the event. Other finalists for this year's Public Schools Teacher of the Year honor were: Carol Bak, a Spanish teacher at Chesapeake High School; Sharon Mattoon, a kindergarten teacher at Solley Elementary School; Alexis Pogonowski, an AVID teacher at Southern High School; and Kathleen Soares, a science teacher at Crofton Middle School.

Melissa Hildt of Archbishop Spalding High School and Gretchen Moran of St. Anne's School of Annapolis were the other nominees for Independent Schools Teacher of the Year.

Griffin was named the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages' Teacher of the Year in February, making her one of five teachers from across the country to compete for the national award. She also has been instrumental in helping North County receive the German Center of Excellence designation by the American Association of Teachers of German. The school is the first in Maryland and one of just nine high schools in the nation to earn the distinction.

BUSINESS PARTNER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

The event also spotlighted 12 businesses and community groups that have had significant impacts on students and schools throughout the county.

The Bowie Baysox took home the honor of Business Partner of the Year for organizations with fewer than 50 employees. The Baysox were nominated by AACPS' STEM Office for the support they provide to students of all grades in schools throughout the county. The organization has created reading and STEM programs to entice and encourage students, begun a College Fair Day, and hosted a teacher night for first-year AACPS teachers.

The Anne Arundel Medical Center SAIL Center won the award for organizations with more than 50 employees for its work with Severna Park High School and other schools. The SAIL Center is the first simulated medical center in the country to offer internships to high school students.

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