

FEBRUARY 2026 TEACHERS of EXCELLENCE®

Recognizing Excellence in Teaching Through Dedication, Compassion & Knowledge

PROFILE

LAKE COUNTY

WHY TEACHING IS MORE THAN A DAY JOB:

Kassandra Ludlow treasures building meaningful relationships with her students. "I truly enjoy learning about their interests, personalities and what makes them who they are," she says. "When students feel known, valued and excited to be at school, learning becomes more enjoyable and meaningful for everyone. Over the years, these connections have carried over to my students' important moments in life such as games, graduation parties and even a wedding. These moments remind me of the lasting impact relationships in education can have on someone throughout their life." Ludlow shares that she is a proud Tri-Creek graduate whose career journey brought her back to the community where she grew up and where some of her teachers are now her colleagues. She received her bachelor's degree from Indiana University Northwest.

FAVORITE TEACHING MEMORY:

"My favorite moments in teaching often come toward the end of the school year, when academic pressures slow down and we can fully enjoy our time together," Ludlow says. "Celebrating accomplishments, participating in fun end-of-year activities and simply enjoying each other's company are the moments I love the most. I also appreciate the everyday opportunities throughout the year when we can be silly, laugh together and create lasting memories."

KASSANDRA LUDLOW,
Fourth Grade
Oak Hill
Elementary School,
Lowell

PROFILE

WHY TEACHING IS MORE THAN A DAY JOB:

Richelle Aubin says that growing up as the oldest sibling in a family of six children made her gravitate toward a career of working with children. She was also inspired by her favorite childhood teacher, Mrs. Cory, who encouraged Aubin to pursue a career in education. "I love the connections I make with the students and their families. I tell my students that my goal is to treat them as I would treat my own children. I cheer them on and celebrate all their successes, big or small. It's important to build a community not only within the classroom, but throughout the school building as well. I make it a point to learn students' names, even if they aren't a student I work with. Many students know me from the wrestling and theater communities. They are used to seeing me cheer them on outside of the classroom. I have students who live in other districts now or who have graduated, who will reach out and invite me to a graduation party or will send me an email to update me on their lives." Aubin earned her bachelor's degree from Purdue University and her master's degree from Indiana Wesleyan University. She has been teaching for 22 years. Aubin lives in Hobart with her husband, Matt, and their two children.

FAVORITE PART OF TEACHING:

"As cliché as it sounds, my favorite memories always involve when a student has that 'Aha' moment," Aubin says. "They find a strategy that helps them understand a concept and can carry it over. I am fortunate to work in such a close-knit community. I went to school with many of my colleagues and have taught some of my colleagues' children."

RICHELLE AUBIN,
Interventionist
Veterans Elementary
School,
Hobart

"Teachers provide a foundation for life as we know it. Without them there would be no doctors, police officers, authors, scientists, engineers ... virtually every vocation. We appreciate and acknowledge their commitment to making our world a better place."

Best Regards,
Kenneth J. Allen



INJURY ATTORNEYS

Accident & Injury Law
Exclusively

Chesterton • Merrillville • Chicago

PASSION • COMMITMENT • EXCELLENCE KENALLENLAW.COM (877)GO WITH KEN

PORTER COUNTY

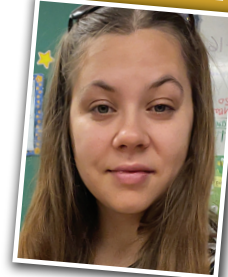
WHY TEACHING IS MORE THAN A DAY JOB:

Tiffany King loves teaching my students. "I love to add songs, dances, chants and hands-on activities to help my students learn and understand new skills," King says. "Hearing them use the same language and encouraging words while they help each other or work independently makes me feel like the best teacher in the world. I wanted to be a teacher because I want to help others learn while feeling safe and welcome despite what they have going on outside of school. School was always a place that made me feel connected to others when life was hard and I was dealing with things outside of my control. My teachers always made me feel seen and important, and it is my dream and mission to do that for our most innocent and vulnerable." King earned her bachelor's degree in general and special education from Indiana University Northwest along with a certificate to help students who speak more than one language.

FAVORITE PART OF TEACHING:

King recalls when one of her students made a cute but insightful comment during an Earth Day lesson about keeping garbage out of bodies of water. "One student said, 'If we keep throwing plastic in the ocean, then the turtles will need plastic surgery.' I love this memory because we were talking about a pretty serious topic, and he was trying to use what he knew to make connections about what we were learning. Also, it was cute and funny. Teaching is all about making connections."

PROFILE



TIFFANY KING,
Kindergarten
South Haven
Elementary School,
Valparaiso

PROFILE

WHY TEACHING IS MORE THAN A DAY JOB:

"I truly enjoy working with middle school students because there is never a dull moment," Kristy Stephens says. "Their enthusiasm and silliness make our school a place full of laughter. It is exciting to work with students at an age where they are constantly changing and growing. I value the opportunity to help them as they develop into who they will become in the future." Stephens earned her bachelor's degree from Indiana University Bloomington and has been teaching at Hebron Middle School for 26 years. She enjoys helping in her school community through activities and events outside the classroom.

FAVORITE PART OF TEACHING:

Stephens says that one of her favorite yearly classroom activities is the "Shark Tank" project. "Our eighth graders participate in a 'Shark Tank' project that culminates with their pitch to various community members who volunteer their time to serve as evaluators. It's great to see a community that genuinely cares for its students and to see our students rise to the occasion with such professionalism and creativity."



KRISTY STEPHENS,
Eighth Grade
Language Arts
Hebron Middle
School, Hebron