Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
Friday, 19 June 2020 01:27



The Gallup-McKinley County Schools Board of Education recognized staff who received Student Achievement Awards from the New Mexico School Board Association during their June 1 meeting.

This award program seeks to promote student achievement in school districts and assist local school boards in recognizing school leaders, staff and other individuals who have played an important role in improving student achievement at the local level, according to their website.

Priscilla Manuelito serves on the Board of Directors and provides leadership and oversight for the Gallup-McKinley County district of NMSBA.

“We have advocated for continuing to recognize individuals in our school and community to help our children achieve excellence with their education,” Manuelito said. “The program seeks to promote student achievement and assist school districts with recognizing and awarding school leaders, staff, and other individuals who play an important role in improving student achievement at their local levels.”

Superintendent Mike Hyatt said due to the social distancing measures put in place by the governor, the board would read off the names of recipients they had nominated previously. This

was done to help make the recognition feel more personal when many of the recipients were not able to attend, he said.

Manuelito listed some of the people and district groups she had nominated for the award, including the bus barns at Thoreau, Tohatchi, Crownpoint, and Tse' Yi' Gai, as well as the staff and bus drivers.

"Having individuals who pick up our children every day with a happy heart and taking them home helps the [students] every day," she said.

The next two people nominated were public relations coordinator Teri Fraizer and web systems operator Vanessa Duckett, both of whom helped promote the district, Manuelito said.

"They're always there at events, continuing to take pictures and showcase our children throughout the district," she said.

The next nominee was McKinley Academy Counselor Daniel Matkovich.

"I've seen firsthand how committed [Matkovich] is in continuing to help students with their college courses and homework. He is always there to help students achieve their goals in higher education," Manuelito said.

Other nominees include a parent in Manuelito's district named Nelson Etsitty; three community members including Norma James and Navajo Council Delegates Mark Freeland and Edmund Yazzie. Manuelito thanked each of them for their advocacy in getting support and supplies for the district, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I want them to see we do see their efforts, we recognize them, and we appreciate them," Manuelito said.

Board Member Michael Schaaf also read off the names and schools of people he nominated for the NMSBA awards.

The list includes Lindsay Smith, maintenance; Evelyn Barreras, central office; Daniel Matkovich, McKinley Academy; Tine Hayes, Miyamura; Susan Wenning, Jefferson Elementary; Bobby Smith, Indian Hills; Gretchen Russell, Rocky View; Julie Kastrounis, Red Rock; Yvette Martinez, John F. Kennedy.

Schaaf also recognized members of the GMCS board who are committed to improving student success. The names include Superintendent Mike Hyatt and assistant superintendents Jvanna Hanks, Pauletta White, Tim Bond, and Gerald Horacek.

“We appreciate all you’ve done for our students and how you’ve fought for them and the district,” Schaaf said.

By Cody Begaye
Sun Correspondent