

## A rewarding profession

Written by By Molly Ann Howell Sun Correspondent  
Friday, 14 April 2023 03:27

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### Meet Camille's Teacher of the Month: Julie Kastrounis

Each month, Camille's Sidewalk Café recognizes one local teacher within the Gallup area for his or her determination to help students go above and beyond. Prospective teachers are nominated by students who feel they deserve to be recognized.

This month's award went to Julie Kastrounis, Red Rock Elementary's physical education teacher.

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Growing up, Kastrounis always knew she wanted to work with children, but she didn't think about going toward the education route until she did some job shadowing with a physical therapist and learned that the career path wasn't for her.

"I decided I wanted to teach about the body and work with children to teach them physical education," Kastrounis said. I grew up in a major sports family, so sports is like second nature to me."

Kastrounis moved to Gallup in 2004 while she was working on an off-campus program with Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich. She completed her student teaching at Rehoboth Christian School, and then worked at Crownpoint Elementary for a year and a half before moving to Red Rock Elementary, where she has now been for 17 years.

"[Red Rock Elementary is] my second home. It's my home away from home," she said.

When asked what her favorite thing about teaching physical education is, Kastrounis said it is getting to work with the students.

"I just really love children and I love introducing them to new things, but I also just love being a positive role model for them in their lives. I just want to inspire them to be the best that they can be in whatever they love," she said.

One of Kastrounis's coworkers, Cynthia Menapace, the school's librarian, said she really enjoys working with Kastrounis. As two of the three specials teachers at Red Rock, Menapace said they share a special bond. Menapace also praised Kastrounis's leadership skills.

"She's a good leader and she knows everything about our school. She's really good with all the kids and she's just absolutely amazing," Menapace said.

Menapace said that everything Kastrounis works on turns out great.

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“I just think she’s an amazing and awesome person. She takes things and runs with it; like if you give her an idea she’ll run with it,” Menapace said. “Everything she does always turns out for the better. It’s good that you’re writing something about her because she’s awesome.”

As a teacher with over a decade of experience, Kastronius was able to give some advice to new teachers. She said all the hard work pays off in the end.

“Just know that all of your hard work – for as many hours as they put in – it really makes a difference for the kids,” Kastronius said. “If you put your mind to it, you can really accomplish a lot in the classroom, and you really can just make a huge difference in children’s lives.”

Kastronius sees teaching as a very rewarding career path, and she said she’s very thankful and grateful to be a teacher.

“I know that it has made me a better person and it has really challenged me to grow in my career journey and my life,” Kastronius said. “I’m very thankful and grateful to be a teacher. I know it’s a major part of who I am and it’s my purpose in life.”

***Interested in nominating your favorite teacher for Teacher of the Month? Contact Camille’s Sidewalk Cafe at (505)722-5017 or stop by 306 S. Second St. in Gallup.***

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