



NEWS

CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DR. DIANNA R. WENTZELL, COMMISSIONER

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Contact: Abbe Smith 860.713.6525

Montville School District's Peggy Kelley Named Connecticut's 2017 Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year

(Hartford, CT) — State Department of Education Commissioner Dianna R. Wentzell today announced that Peggy Kelley, a paraeducator at Mohegan Elementary School in Uncasville, has been named Connecticut's 2017 Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year.

The Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year Program, named in honor of a paraeducator who was killed in Newtown, recognizes the important role paraeducators play in supporting student achievement. The program honors one paraeducator who has demonstrated exceptional skill and dedication in his or her role, thereby earning the respect and admiration of students, teachers, administrators, coworkers, and parents. Paraeducators assist certified teachers in the classroom and play an integral role in developing students' academic and social skills.

Commissioner Wentzell and State Department of Education Chief Talent Officer Sarah Barzee visited Mohegan Elementary School on Tuesday to make the announcement in front of the entire school.

"Connecticut is honored to recognize the tremendous contributions Peggy Kelley has made to the education community," said Lt. Governor Nancy Wyman. "The Paraeducator of the Year award recognizes her unwavering commitment to public service and to Connecticut's students. I join Mohegan Elementary School in congratulating and thanking her."

"Paraeducators play a vital role in creating supportive learning environments that engage the whole child, inspire a love of learning, and equip students with the skills they need to pursue their dreams," said Commissioner Wentzell. "Peggy Kelley's dedication to her students, her school, and her community has undoubtedly had a profound impact on the lives of countless families as she has helped students to realize their full potential. I congratulate Mrs. Kelley on this honor."

"Peggy Kelley is a true professional," said Superintendent of Montville Public Schools Brian C. Levesque. "The thoughtful and caring way in which she approaches her job is a lesson to us all each and every day. I am extremely proud to know that she will represent Montville Schools, as well as paraprofessionals from the state of Connecticut, during the coming year."

The rigorous selection process for Paraeducator of the Year, which includes candidate applications and interviews, was conducted by representatives of the School Paraprofessional Advisory Council, which is

composed of former state Paraeducators of the Year and representatives from educational organizations and collective bargaining.

Connecticut's Paraeducator of the Year is selected from approximately 14,000 public school paraeducators in the state and represents the profession in forums and advisory committees influencing education policy and public awareness of the successes that take place daily in schools, as well as the challenges they face.

Mrs. Kelley's career as a paraeducator began in 1998 when she was inspired to pursue a career in education after assisting in her children's classrooms. Her first assignment was in a special needs classroom, and she quickly found a home working with children who have multiple disabilities and complex medical and behavioral needs.

During her 18-year career, Mrs. Kelley has worked at LEARN as an at-home intervention specialist, coordinated Montville's Parks and Recreation Special Education Summer Camp program, and participates annually in an afterschool reading and math intervention program.

Mrs. Kelley obtained an associate degree from Three Rivers Community College and she believes that paraprofessionals' roles extend well beyond the classroom.

"Fight for their rights when no one else does," Mrs. Kelley said. "Give them the skills to succeed as an independent and productive member of society despite their struggles. And remember, every child can learn, excel, and succeed given the opportunity."

Mrs. Kelley and her husband, Duane, have two sons, Duane Kelley Jr. who lives in Vernon, CT, and Sean Kelley who lives in Oakdale, CT. She will succeed 2016 Connecticut Paraeducator of the Year Denise R. Seel, who is a paraeducator at L.W. Batchelder Elementary School in Harford. Ms. Seel will conclude her term as Paraeducator of the Year on December 31.

Mrs. Kelley will be honored at a ceremony on October 13, 2016, at A.I. Prince Technical High School in Hartford.

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CONTACT: Abbe Smith, Director of Communications
Connecticut State Department of Education
Phone: 860-713-6525
Mobile: 860-381-7096
Email: Abbe.Smith@ct.gov