Outstanding Advocate Award

Beth Palmatier

Gull Lake Gateway Academy

Gull Lake Community Schools

Gull Lake, Michigan

School secretaries perform a myriad of responsibilities in a school, especially an alternative ed. high school. Many spend long hours completing the state’s required forms and documentation. Beth Palmatier is able to see past all of that and work hard at helping the students who attend Gull Lake Gateway Academy achieve their potential. In fact, her nominator’s letter stated she felt the school’s graduation rate was due, at least in part, to Beth’s influence and support. Beth is described as “everyone’s grandma, aunt, big sister, nurse, priest and butt-kicker all rolled into one person”.

Beth serves as a guide and mentor to her fellow staff members as well as the students at Gateway. She has taught them many lessons about how to approach life. Beth is no stranger to facing adversity. A month ago she was diagnosed with cancer. Instead of being depressed and giving up, she continued to come to work with her head held high and “shared her journey with the students”. In the words of one of the students who wrote a letter of support for her nomination, “She not only inspires me to do my work and be motivated, but she has made me realize that no matter how low life gets, it’s never a reason to give up.” Beth’s example of facing a life threatening condition has been an inspiration to all those who come into contact with her. Student Jonathon Yale stated that Mrs. P has shown him “the only thing that can get you down is yourself.”

It is evident from the letters that were submitted in support of Beth’s nomination that her influence goes well beyond the four walls of Gateway Academy. Her primary job is working as a secretary for the administration of the school district. She uses that role to advocate for the program at Gateway. She is characterized by standing up for the students and program. Student Teacher Liaison, Gretchen Wilga states that “Beth has been our biggest cheerleader to the administration. She goes to bat for our program and our students. She is like our mama bear, making sure we are taken care of. Beth has “greatly affected our students and our community through her commitment to Gateway Academy.”

In the words of her nominator, Lynette Walker, Beth Palmatier “exemplifies the district’s mission to . . . educate every child to achieve his/her potential.” Although Beth is retiring this year, the staff and students at Gull Lake Gateway Academy are certain that “her spirit will continually encourage them to face hardships and never, ever give up.”

CONGRATULATIONS Beth!