

Milam's Moton, Sheffield Named TPSD's Best

TUPELO, Miss. — Call it a clean sweep for Milam Elementary.

Tuesday afternoon at the Tupelo Public School District Board of Trustees December meeting, Paul Moton was named Administrator of the Year, while Laura Sheffield garnered Teacher of the Year honors.

Both are eligible to receive the same accolades on the state level, which will be announced later this spring.

Moton, now in his sixth year as the principal at Milam after serving in the same capacity at Rankin, also received this coveted award in 2014-15.

"Winning for the second time speaks volumes to what the teachers at Milam do every single day," he said. "They are the real winners because they do the little things each day that makes a difference in the lives of children."

Under his tutelage, both schools have achieved A-rankings by the Mississippi Department of Education. At Rankin, he oversaw the transformation of the 3-5 school going from a D (Academic Watch) to a B in just one year.

"Mr. Moton is an excellent instructional leader," TPSD superintendent Dr. Rob Picou said. "He is respected by his staff and students. Whenever I visit Milam, Mr. Moton is either in the hallway monitoring students or in a classroom observing instruction. In today's world, as a result of the many challenges faced by principals, too many search for excuses. Mr. Moton is one that never accepts or uses an excuse. He accepts responsibility and searches for a solution.

"He sets expectations high and provides the motivation necessary to keep everyone focused on the hard work of improving academic achievement. It is a sincere honor to congratulate Mr. Moton as the Administrator of the Year for the Tupelo Public School District."

Sheffield, who earned her Bachelor of Science in Education from Ole Miss in 2000, has spent her entire career at Milam.

After serving as a gifted teacher from 2000-17, the 1996 Tupelo High School graduate transitioned from the classroom to the library as a media specialist as she saw "an opportunity to serve all TPSD students in a new way."

She is motivated by the philosophy that education should challenge every student to practice for the skills of life.

"She is the true definition of what personifies a great teacher," Moton said. "She can teach any student regardless of where he or she is from, and no matter what she does, it's with a smile on her face."

In 2005, Sheffield received the LD Hancock Award of Excellence, and she's a two-time CREATE Teacher of Distinction winner. From 2002-2004, the Tupelo native served as the publicity chairperson for the Mississippi Association for Gifted Children, and she is currently the chairperson for the Gifted Education Local Survey Committee.

She also earned her National Board certification in 2004 and has served as a World Class Teaching Program mentor for those pursuing that same distinction.

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