

HALL OF DISTINCTION

Class of 2023

INDUCTION CEREMONY

Thursday, September 14, 2023

Dr. Nancy Kienzle Utterback

Dr. Utterback earned a bachelor's and master's degree in Speech Communications and her Ph.D. in Education from the University of Akron.

For 16 years as a teacher and speech coach at Canton South High School, each week between September through March, Nancy Kienzle spent her school lunches and after-school hours in her office working with students during the week. Then each Saturday morning, she would join those same students on a cold bus ride to a day long speech tournament, eventually returning to the Canton South's parking lot between 4 PM and 6 PM.

Nancy taught students in multiple categories, which included humor, drama, original oratory, extemporaneous, prose and poetry, and duet acting. Under her leadership, Canton South became one of the top speech teams in the State. Nancy qualified hundreds of students for State and National Speech Tournaments. She taught countless students how to communicate and conquer what many list as their biggest fear, speaking in front of an audience.

She hosted and organized the Canton South Speech Tournament, attracting the best speech teams in Ohio. There was no rest for the weary; immediately following speech season, Nancy directed plays and musicals for Canton South.

Her speech team members have taken the communication skills taught by Nancy to become filmmakers, broadcasters, and even circus and stage performers, as well as doctors, police chiefs, and speech teachers. The central theme with each of those professions is the ability to communicate effectively. While connecting with a few of her former students, they immediately credit Nancy's impactful teaching as the reason they have had that skill and success in their lives and professions.

One of Nancy's former students, Diane Wasnak, class of '79, described her experiences in her classroom and on her speech team like this: "As an independent-natured adolescent. I was constantly asking the "why" of societal

norms and refused to be put into any box labeled "smart kids," "popular kids," "burnouts," etc., hence the exasperation of many of my teachers. Nancy gave me the opportunity to "fit in" without being put in a box. Her classroom was filled with encouraging and inspirational quotes pinned to the bulletin board, a novelty at the time. Her desire to encourage people carried beyond her classroom. She brought together her speech team by nurturing our individual human spirit."

In 1986, Dr. Nancy Kienzle Utterback made a difficult decision to leave Canton South and establish Communicate Institute, a private enterprise, to spread her beliefs about effective communication and the reach of human potential. She would spend the next 25 years not only as a leading authority and presenter to hundreds of school districts throughout the Midwest but she led management training to the highest levels of executive leadership across Ohio. J.M. Smucker Company, the Timken Company, and scores of others trusted her ability to educate their executives in skills and communication philosophy.

Yet, Nancy Utterback and Communicate Institute are most well known for their long-standing relationship with Walsh University. Together they have held over 3000 class sections for K-12 educators to help them renew their teaching licenses. Of special emphasis, not surprisingly, have been character education, developing self-reliance in children, and meeting the needs of the less fortunate and at-risk students. All the while dedicated to Nancy's mission: that educators touch the lives of children and that they model the reach toward each human being's full potential.

Nancy and her husband, Kurt, have a scholarship fund through the Stark Community Foundation. Her family includes stepchildren Corey & Steven Utterback and grandchildren Molly & Maggie.