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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 30, 2023

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SHANAHAN MIDDLE SCHOOL EDUCATOR RECEIVES DISTRICT'S FIRST \$25,000 MILKEN EDUCATOR AWARD

Olentangy Shanahan Middle School math teacher Marissa McCarthy has been awarded the very first [Milken Educator Award](#). McCarthy, a sixth grade turned eighth grade math teacher, is the first Olentangy Local Schools teacher to receive this national honor since the Award's creation in 1987. Described by her colleagues as innovative, the Milken Family Foundation recognized McCarthy for utilizing unique project-based learning experiences across the curriculum. In addition to the national honor, McCarthy's award also includes a \$25,000 unrestricted cash prize.

"This is a tremendous honor, and not at all how I expected today to go!" remarked McCarthy immediately following the surprise award assembly this afternoon. "Shanahan is the best school, with the best students and staff. This is a lot to process, and I am still at a loss for words."

Milken Educator Awards Senior Program Director Greg Gallagher and Ohio Department of Education and Workforce Interim Director Jessica Voltolini joined the Shanahan Middle School and Olentangy community at the surprise assembly, presenting McCarthy with the prestigious honor before enthusiastic students, colleagues, dignitaries and media. Bestowed by the [Milken Family Foundation](#), the Award recognizes outstanding K-12 educators for their excellence and leadership in the profession.

"Marissa McCarthy expertly demonstrates how data-driven, project-based instruction benefits learners at every level," said Milken Educator Awards Senior Program Director Greg Gallagher. "Her ability to address individual needs to achieve growth in the classroom and beyond makes her a wonderful addition to the Milken Educator Network. Congratulations, Marissa. I am excited to see where you 'grow' from here."

Hailed as the "Oscars of Teaching," the Awards will honor up to 75 recipients across the country in 2023-24 as part of the Milken Family Foundation's Journey to the 3,000th Milken Educator. 2023-24 will reach \$75 million in individual financial prizes spanning the length of the initiative and more than \$144 million invested in the Milken Educator Award national network overall, empowering recipients to "Celebrate, Elevate, and Activate" the K-12 profession and inspiring young, capable people to pursue teaching as a career.

"During my thirty-two years in education, I have worked with a multitude of educators with varying levels of skill and professionalism. Occasionally, I have the opportunity to work with a teacher such as



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Marissa McCarthy, who I would consider to be truly exceptional,” Shanahan Middle School Principal Steven Tartt remarked. “She is a content expert and a consummate professional who forms meaningful relationships with students, while consistently getting them to perform above expectations. She does an incredible job of engaging her students in real-life lessons that challenge their thinking and get them to grow as both problem solvers and as people. In addition to serving as an eighth-grade math teacher, Marissa is also the school’s technology co-chairperson and serves as a member of the Building Leadership Team. She is a true team player and a tremendous asset to the students and staff at Shanahan Middle School.”

“Olentangy Schools is a top-performing district because of the people that make our schools a special place to learn,” added Olentangy Schools Superintendent Todd R. Meyer. “We are incredibly proud of Marissa McCarthy, an exemplary teacher who gives her whole heart to the profession. Congratulations Marissa on this incredible honor.”

The Milken Educator Award is not a lifetime achievement honor. Recipients are sought out while early to mid-career for what they have achieved – and for the promise of what they will accomplish given the resources and opportunities afforded by the Award. McCarthy is one of two Ohio recipients for the 2023-24 season.

More About Marissa McCarthy

Sparking Student Engagement: Eighth grade students are always buzzing around Marissa McCarthy’s math classroom at Shanahan Middle School, engaging in real-life lessons and navigating their way through rigorous and relevant curriculum. A former sixth grade math teacher, McCarthy’s impactful instructional strategies have contributed in large part to Shanahan’s high performance. She utilizes project-based learning (PBL) and differentiates instruction to strengthen student engagement. Students can be seen in small groups and rotating math stations, focusing on particular areas of need determined by pre-assessment data. Striving to make math fun for students, McCarthy encourages classroom collaboration and spends time outside of school hours providing extra assistance. She organizes her team’s annual PBL Olympics, where classes compete against each other in challenges targeting different core content areas. One of McCarthy’s previous math activities led students to connect a tangible and realistic activity — such as mixing paint — to mathematical ratios. In pairs, students worked to solve the ratio problems, then mixed paint based on their solutions. Together, they celebrated their success by creating a class banner using all of the newly mixed paints.

Encouraging Schoolwide Collaboration: Keeping her eye on the big picture, McCarthy consistently discovers new ways to take her instruction to the next level and values the opportunity to test new strategies in the classroom, including several outlined in Peter Liljedahl’s book, “Building Thinking Classrooms in Mathematics,” which the math department covered in a book study. Before her move to eighth grade, McCarthy attended a summer conference in Atlanta to fully immerse herself in the algebraic curriculum she would soon be teaching. A skilled problem-solver herself, McCarthy serves as Shanahan’s technology chair and organizes school Chromebooks, orders new technology, and



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provides technical support and professional development for her colleagues. Additionally, she is a valued member of the school building's leadership team and contributes her knowledge and professionalism through mentorship of new teachers.

Shaping Young Community Leaders: McCarthy's mentorship extends throughout the student body, as she often helps students enhance their personal growth outside of the classroom and connects with parents and families to build a strong foundation of support for each student. Additionally, she started a club at Shanahan serving girls interested in math and science, hoping to inspire future careers in STEM.

Education: McCarthy earned a Bachelor of Science in education from Bowling Green State University in 2008 and a Master of Science in education from the University of South Florida in 2012.

More about the Milken Educator Award Journey: "The Future Belongs to the Educated"

- The honorees attend an all-expenses-paid Milken Educator Awards Forum in Los Angeles in June 2024, where they will network with their new colleagues as well as veteran Milken Educators and other education leaders about how to broaden their impact on K-12 education.
- Honorees receive powerful mentorship opportunities for expanded leadership roles that strengthen education practice and policy. Milken Friends Forever (MFF) pairs a new recipient with a veteran Milken Educator mentor; the Expanding MFF Resource and Explorer Program fosters individual veteran Milken Educator partnerships around a specific topic area; and Activating Milken Educators (AME) promotes group collaboration in and across states to tackle pressing educational needs.
- Veteran Milken Educators demonstrate a wide range of leadership roles at state, national and international levels.
- The \$25,000 cash Award is unrestricted. Recipients have used the money in diverse ways. Some recipients have spent the funds on their children's or their own continuing education, financing dream field trips, establishing scholarships, and even adopting children.

About the Milken Educator Awards

The first Milken Educator Awards were presented by the Milken Family Foundation in 1987. Created by Lowell Milken, the Awards provide public recognition and individual financial rewards of \$25,000 to elementary and secondary school teachers, principals, and specialists from around the country who are furthering excellence in education. Recipients are heralded in early to mid-career for what they have achieved and for the promise of what they will accomplish. The Milken Family Foundation celebrates more than 40 years of elevating education in America and around the world. Learn more at MFF.org<<https://www.mff.org/>>.

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