

Woodstock Community Unit School District 200

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WHS selects 2023 Distinguished Alumni Award recipients

Woodstock High School presented its Distinguished Alumni Award to two outstanding Blue Streak graduates during the school's Homecoming festivities on Friday, Sept. 29.

Art Vallicelli, principal of Woodstock High School, said he was proud of the Distinguished Alumni recognition program that began last school year as part of the school building's 100th anniversary celebration.

This year's designees are Dr. Victoria Carr-Brendel, a celebrated medical device inventor and executive, and Rafael Castaneda, a volunteer leader and business owner.

"Blue Streaks are making a difference all over the world, and it's important to recognize those contributions. We're extremely proud of the examples that Dr. Carr-Brendel and Mr. Castaneda have set for current Blue Streaks," Vallicelli said

Dr. Victoria Carr-Brendel is a 1984 Woodstock High School graduate. As a student at WHS, Carr-Brendel worked for the City of Woodstock and participated in the Mosquito Abatement Program. While working there, she was also instrumental in bringing recycling to the city of Woodstock.

She received a bachelor's in biology from Monmouth College, a master's in microbiology from Iowa State University, and a doctorate in microbiology and immunology from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Carr-Brendel began her career in research and development amassing over 100 patents and became pivotal in inventing the continuous glucose monitor at Dexcom. She is currently the group vice president of Sonova Group, and President of Advanced Bionics, a leading provider of cochlear implants.

She was voted one of the Top 25 Medical Device Executives of 2019, named one of the Top 25 Women Leaders in Medical Devices in 2020, and was also a finalist for the LA Times Woman of the Year in 2021. Dr. Carr-Brendel has inspired women to break the glass ceiling in the world of science and medical devices and was initially inspired to study science because of WHS teachers, Mr. Gardner and Mrs. Oughton.

Rafael Castaneda is a 2010 graduate who has always focused on working hard and giving back. While a student at WHS, he became a regular and dedicated volunteer at Family Health Partnership Clinic. There his community spirit and leadership skills shined, making him a great role model for other students.

Castaneda then attended McHenry County College where he served as President of the Latinos Unidos organization before transferring to Roosevelt University where he was recognized as one of the Best Under 40 by the McHenry County Business Journal and the Northwest Herald.

Today, Castaneda continues to give back to the Woodstock community through his continued volunteer efforts, and ownership of the Woodstock Dairy Queen.

Woodstock High School will seek nominations for 2024's Distinguished Alumni this December. Check the high school website's alumni tab for more information.