

North Branch Area Schools “Person of the Week”

Welcome to our NBAS Person of the Week! Each week, we highlight a member of our incredible team to showcase their unique contributions and share a bit about their journey. This week, we’re shining the spotlight on Leann Gwinn, the Child Care Coordinator of the district’s F.A.B.S. program.

Leann possesses a deep understanding of child development, strong leadership skills, excellent communication abilities, and a passion for working with children to foster an environment where children and staff alike can flourish. For her, it's not only about meeting the standards but also about exceeding expectations to create a standout childcare facility. Our F.A.B.S program has flourished under Leann’s leadership, and the positive impact she has made on our community is immeasurable!

Leann’s story:



My name is Leann Gwinn. I’m honored and humbled to be nominated as NBAS Person of the Week. I am the Child Care Coordinator for FABS (NB Area Schools Child Care Program). For nearly 30 years, I have enjoyed a fulfilling career working with children and have envisioned no other profession for myself.

I grew up in the Mayville area. I graduated from there and I also attended the Tuscola County Ed Tech Center as part of the early childhood education program. I met my husband Perry Gwinn at my Grandma’s church and we’ve been married 41 years. We have 3 children, Matt, NB class of 2004, he graduated from Imlay City adult ed. Nathanael, NB class of 2006, graduated from NB Quest. Elizabeth, NB graduate of 2008. We also have 4 adorable grandchildren. Our family has Sunday dinners after church each week. We enjoy camping, even in our own backyard.

I stayed home with my children until they were all in school. I worked for a couple of years at an Adult Care Home in Lapeer with elderly clients. I applied at North Branch Elementary School in the fall of 1997 to sub for playground/lunch aids and did sub a few different times. Then, Fran VanHaften called me to see if I’d be willing to sub for the district's child care center. I said I would be interested and the rest is history. I was hired into FABS full time in February of 1998.

In 2007, Fran approached me and asked me about taking over the director's position because she was retiring. I obtained my CDA, then started classes at Delta College to get my associates

degree in early childhood. Later, when the new elementary school was built, FABS stayed in the old building. The plan was to create an early childhood center for preschool programs and FABS. Mr. Piwinski called me to say he was moving FABS to the new building while the renovations were taking place.

In 2012, I became an American Heart Association CPR trainer. My staff needed to have recertification every couple years so becoming a trainer made good sense. It was my dream to have all NBAS staff CPR and 1st aid certified. We all are now.

My favorite parts of my job are teaching children and staff that “life happens” but it’s ok. It thrills my soul when I hear a little person say, “I did it all by myself”. I love reading a story and watching their little faces thrilled, wrapped in expectation of what will happen next.

I’ve experienced some failures and some disappointments. I’ve also had a ton of heartwarming joys and many laughs and amazing good friends at NBAS.

If I could give my younger self advice - I’d say learn to laugh at yourself. Everyone is living with yucky stuff. Most of the time when they go off on you, it’s because they are experiencing things out of their control and you are an easy target. Be the best you can be. Learn from your mistakes and experiences. Don’t carry other folks' bad baggage with you. Tomorrow is a new day, embrace it!

Here is what some of her co-workers had to say...

- Leann goes above and beyond for families. She makes fabs staff feel like we are a family.
- Leann is actually one of the main reasons I have stayed with FABS for so long. She is the best boss I have had. She is caring, honest (to a fault), someone you can always talk to, and I believe that all who work with her can go to her in confidence with anything in life that is troubling them and she will listen and help if you need her to. She is not just my boss, she is my friend who I have grown to respect and cherish.
- I have had the pleasure to work with Leann for several years. Her compassion for each child is unwavering. You can see her enjoyment every day by her genuine smile and her willingness to help in any situation. She is not only there for all the children in her program (which is over 200) she is there for the families as well. Whether it is a small gesture as a prayer, a helpful conversation or offering resources, her actions speak volumes of her dedication to FABS. Her caring nature is a true blessing for North Branch Schools!

Thank you, Leann, for your kindness, dedication, and unwavering support for our students, families and staff. Your vision and leadership have transformed F.A.B.S. into a model of excellence. We appreciate all you do to support our students, families, and staff. Thank you for being such a valuable part of our team!