



Carman, Tull Receive TPSD Top Honors

TUPELO, Miss. — It was a special day for the Tupelo Public School District at its December Board of Trustees meeting, as two of its biggest awards of the year were announced.

Jessie Carman, an English/Language Arts teacher at Milam, was named the 2026 Teacher of the Year, while Kristin Tull, also with Milam, was named the 2026 Parent of the Year.

It was the first award of this type for both women.

Carman, who earned her bachelor's degree from the Mississippi University for Women and master's from Mississippi College, is in her first year at Milam.

She began her teaching career in 2017 with the Pass Christian Public School District and remained there until 2021 when she moved to the New Albany School District to be closer to her family in Mt. Pleasant. While at both places, she was nominated for Teacher of the Year four times.

"I believe all students deserve to receive a high-quality education in an environment where they feel safe, valued and loved," she said. "It's a shared responsibility among all stakeholders, including students, teachers, parents and the community."

Carman has received numerous accolades during her eight-year career in the classroom, including the “Difference Maker In Reading” award at Pass Christian Middle School in 2021 due to the growth her students showed on the 8th-grade MAAP ELA assessment.

She is also a certified Apple Learning Coach and Teacher and integrates innovative technology practices into her instruction to enhance student engagement and a personalized learning experience.

“Although she is in her first year at Milam, she has made an immediate and lasting impact on our school community through her professionalism, leadership and unwavering dedication to student success,” principal Dr. Terry Harbin said. “She’s a seasoned educator whose knowledge and experience have significantly enriched our English Language Arts department. She consistently seeks ways to make learning meaningful, engaging and equitable for all students and exemplifies what it means to be a true team player.”

Tull believes it’s extremely important to be involved in her child’s educational life. With her 11-year-old son, Hughes, at Milam, she wants him to understand doing something is always better than talking about something.

She strives to always help others and work for the greater good of the Tupelo community.

As PTO president, she has seen firsthand how the staff at Milam shapes the lives of all students and build personal relationships.

“Kristin is an exceptional example of what it means to be a dedicated, engaged and supportive parent,” Harbin said. “Her energy, enthusiasm and unwavering commitment to students and staff make her an invaluable asset to our school family. She consistently goes above and beyond in every role she undertakes.”

And those roles are many.

Already this year, she has organized the Community Tailgate, Homecoming Parade and Milam’s clothing drive. Tull noticed back in the summer there were minimal funds to properly take care of the students and staff, so she put together many different types of fundraisers. All were successful.

She even learned the value of partnering with local businesses.

“Our community has been so energetic and quick to jump in with us to supply needs this year,” she said. “I have been able to make lasting connections with businesses in Tupelo that are mutually beneficial and build a greater sense of community.”

She is also quick to point out these endeavors would not be possible without the dedication of other Milam parents who share her same passion.

Individual School Teachers of the Year

Carver

Mamie Caveness

ECEC

Jessica Hall

Joyner

Michelle McCarty

Lawhon

Josh Funderburg

Lawndale

Samantha Jones

Milam

Jessie Carman

Parkway

*Amanda Warren

Pierce Street

Kelsey Pearce

Rankin

Miranda Knowles

Thomas Street

Leslie Curry

Tupelo Career Center

Aundrea Adams

Tupelo Middle School

Jodi Picou

Tupelo High School

Jamie Ingram

Structured Day

Jaclyn Arnett

Individual School Parents of the Year**Carver**

Hannah Claire McCullough

ECEC

Brandy White

Joyner

Samantha McCarter

Lawhon

Chasity Hampton

Lawndale

Katlese Rutherford

Milam

Kristin Tull

Parkway

Kebebe Wilson

Pierce Street

Leigh Ann Whitehead

Rankin

Maggie Metcalfe

Thomas Street

Jessica Archer

Tupelo High School

Gracie Menetre

Tupelo Middle School

Laura Miller

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