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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lakeville Teacher Named Honoree in Outstanding Educator Program

Brandi Gordon, a teacher at Kenwood Trail Middle School in the Lakeville Area Schools was surprised April 10 with news that she is a recipient of a 2019 WEM Outstanding Educator Award as an Academic Challenge Coach, an honor that is accompanied by a \$15,000 award.

Gordon is being honored with an *Academic Challenge Coach Award*, which recognizes teachers who are exemplary coaches of student teams that participate and compete in academic challenges approved by the Minnesota Academic League Council.

Gordon has been teaching and coaching for 22 years and currently teaches Earth and space science. In addition to teaching, Gordon coaches Science Olympiad. Gordon feels it is important her competition students understand the behavior philosophy that they are not only rated by their official achievement at competitions, but also by the observations and opinions of our competitors. This guiding principle which began with her team has now been adopted statewide as the Science Olympiad code of ethics that all teams in the state must follow.

“Whether we win a trophy or not, our team is expected to be equally gracious in their winning as they are for not winning,” Gordon shared.

“At an age where we were constantly doubting ourselves, the transition between a carefree child and a stress-ridden teenager being a difficult one for many, every member of the Science Olympiad team walked through the hallways with confidence, with pride, because we all knew that we were important, that we mattered,” said a student. “Mrs. Gordon did that.”

In addition to teaching and coaching, Gordon has also served as the Minnesota state director for the Middle School Science Olympiad, running the state tournament and representing Minnesota at the national tournament.

“Mrs. Gordon accepts and welcomes every student who shows up at her door asking to be part of the team,” shared a colleague. “No prerequisites are expected by Ms. Gordon because her overall goal is to promote a love of science for every student through their participation on the team. Because of her approach, the students on our Science Olympiad team view themselves as successful scientists who always have more to learn.”

In addition to the *Academic Challenge Coach Award*, other educators are being honored with the *Ethics in Education Award* (exemplary educators who embody ethical behavior and promote ethical development for students through classroom or school activities, policies or curriculum), *Teacher Achievement Award* (exemplary teachers who support, inspire, and assist students to attain greater learning as evidenced by student achievement) and *Athletic Coach Award* (teachers who are exemplary coaches of athletic teams).

Educators are first nominated for the WEM Outstanding Educator Awards Program by students, parents, colleagues or community members. Those who accept the nomination provide additional information for consideration by Synergy & Leadership Exchange and a blue ribbon selection panel, which reviews and ranks the nominees. In addition to the six statewide honorees, additional educators have been selected as regional honorees for 2019. These honorees will be announced in May.

Synergy & Leadership Exchange is a non-profit organization dedicated to fostering collaboration to advance the development of ethical citizens, providing educational resources, and celebrating achievement and best practices in Minnesota schools, businesses and communities. For more information on the WEM Outstanding Educator Awards Program and Synergy & Leadership Exchange, visit: www.synergyexchange.org.