

May 3, 2019
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For additional information:
Leah Garry, Synergy & Leadership Exchange
Phone: 507-389-5115

Redwood Falls Educator Named Recipient of \$15,000 Award for Excellence

Matt Lundeen, a teacher at Redwood Valley Middle School in the Redwood Area School District, was surprised May 3 with news that he is a recipient of a 2019 WEM Outstanding Educator Award as an Athletic Coach, an honor that is accompanied by a \$15,000 award.

Lundeen is one of six educators being honored by the WEM Foundation and Synergy & Leadership Exchange for outstanding accomplishments and contributions to student learning. His recognition comes in the Athletic Coach Award, which recognizes teachers who are exemplary coaches of athletic teams.

Lundeen has been teaching and coaching for 21 years. He currently teaches sixth grade language arts and social studies and coaches varsity football, middle school basketball and golf.

Coaching the mental aspect of athletics in a direct and specific way has become a big part of Lundeen's approach over the last few years. He has been intentional about getting educated on the latest research out there and finding simple, specific and practical ways to implement that with his players. Lundeen created four absolutes that are: high performing athletes own their why, high performing athletes are "locked in," high performing athletes get to the next play in the right frame of mind, and high performing athletes choose positive emotions. These statements help lay the foundation for his program. They strive to coach their player's in football, but also coaching daily in future life skills.

"Lundeen has a passion for the game of football and carries it on through his players and his coaches," shared a colleague. "His ability to form relationships with players and coaches are genuine and last longer than any season, they truly last a lifetime."

Reinforcing his players' positive behaviors in the school hallways, classrooms and community is celebrated by Lundeen. Every week he asks for feedback from teachers and other staff in the district about specific positive behaviors that should be recognized. Helmet decals are then given out to the players to celebrate their positive behaviors. The decals are stickers about the size of a quarter that a player puts on their helmet. Players love getting as many decals as possible and can also earn them from teammates simply by being appreciated. Lundeen emphasizes that playing the game of football the right way is important, but doing life off the field the right way is even more!

"Under Mr. Lundeen's coaching and guidance, we were not a team, we were a family," said a student. "He didn't just coach us in football but also coached us in life. He taught boys how to be men. He taught us how to act on the field and thus translated it to how to act off the field."

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

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 names 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.